

Larkin Street Youth Services The First 25 Years

William F. Campbell



YOUTH SERVICES

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With heartfelt thanks to Barclays Global Investors for generously underwriting *Larkin Street Youth Services: The First 25 Years*.

To my mom, Mildred, my wife, Marilyn,
and our son, Scott.

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Forward

As you are about to experience for yourself in *The First 25 Years*, the story of Larkin Street Youth Services is both profound and inspiring. It illustrates the tremendous power of listening, learning, and believing in the resiliency of the human spirit.

Larkin Street began by taking a chance on troubled youth and helping them to identify their strengths and own sense of tenacity and resolve. The agency's unwavering goal has been to provide young adults with the requisite tools, knowledge and resources to help put their passions to work. Of course nothing speaks louder than results, and today Larkin Street is proud to have helped countless teens and young adults find their way back to a path of purpose and direction. The impact that Larkin Street Youth Services has on individuals, and the community at large, simply cannot be overstated.

It is for all these reasons that we at Barclays Global Investors are honored to help tell this incredible story and to celebrate Larkin Street's accomplishments over the last two and a half decades. We are proud to be a part of the community of encouragement and support that helps move young people from the streets to the promise of a better tomorrow.

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the tireless staff, board, and the countless volunteers who have never ceased believing in the kids and supporting them regardless of the challenges they face. Our greatest appreciation, however, goes to the Larkin Street population for their own unyielding determination to find and forge a better future.

Blake Grossman
CEO
Barclays Global Investors



Introduction

To most people, the homeless youth on San Francisco's Polk Street in the early 1980s were part of the landscape. To some, they were a nuisance. To predators, they were there to exploit. A small number of residents came to see these young people as kids who needed help.

These concerned residents not only saw a need, but they realized “if not us, who?” What they started in a church fellowship hall became an internationally lauded organization.

Larkin Street Youth Services is committed to helping some of San Francisco's most vulnerable young people move beyond the street and to equip them for productive lives. For years, Larkin Street has been a national and international leader in offering compassion, care, hope, practical support, and positive options for youth at risk.

Larkin Street's comprehensive program works. It provides a spectrum of services that address the needs of homeless young people by meeting them where they are, attending to their immediate needs, and giving them a safe and stable place to live and a supportive environment. Larkin Street offers a range of housing options, from emergency shelter to permanent housing.

A skilled and caring staff, and well-designed facilities and programs, help kids establish a stable emotional foundation and build self-esteem and hope. In addition to housing, the agency's comprehensive support services include intensive case management, medical care, mental health services, HIV prevention, education, and job skills training. Larkin Street encourages its young people to set and reach goals and to accept accountability. Approximately three-quarters of the former street youth who have completed Larkin Street's comprehensive programs over the years exit street life.

An observer of Larkin Street will see several themes through its history. One is the singular passion that its board, staff, and volunteers share: a passion to help kids who have been dealt a bad hand and deserve better. Another is remarkable insight that has enabled Larkin Street to understand barriers that youth face and to offer innovative solutions, starting with the decision to locate a multiservice drop-in center in a street level space near the youth who needed help finding their way in life.

Still another theme is the rigor with which Larkin Street has confronted such questions as: For what results will we hold ourselves accountable? How will we achieve them? What will it cost, and how will we fund that cost? And how will we create and sustain the organization that we need to achieve results? A 2008 *Harvard Business Review* article featured Larkin Street's strategic planning process as a model of rigorously taking on these questions to deliver real impact.

Throughout its history, Larkin Street has cast a wider and wider net—to reach underserved populations and to reduce barriers to care. Establishing the country's first assisted care facility for young people with late-stage AIDS is an example. Opening a new gateway in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood is another. Others include reaching out to Latino youth, youth struggling with severe mental health needs, youth who are about to age out of foster care, and youth with multiple disorders that complicate their care, such as drug addiction and HIV, physical disability, or behavioral health issues.

One is also struck by the capacity of kids to transcend what has happened to them and by the tenacity of the staff, volunteers and board members who believe in them. Some of the

1981



Roger Hull
Old First Presbyterian Church

young people Larkin Street serves have pasts that are almost unthinkable. They face steep challenges. Larkin Street builds on the resilience of youth and refuses to give up on them, whatever the challenges or setbacks. Larkin Street has high expectations, and it has seen kids meet them. In Larkin Street's first 25 years, tens of thousands of street youth have been given a chance to reach their potential and pursue their dreams.

It is not possible to give a complete narrative here of Larkin Street's beginning and its first 25 years. This account tells part of the story, with special thanks to all who have shared their memories and who have made this book possible.



1981 – 1983

Hearing Concerns, Inspiring Neighbors, Renting a Storefront

“What is your church doing to help these kids on the street?” a visitor from Cleveland asked Roger Hull, the pastor of San Francisco's Old First Presbyterian Church, in early 1981.

At about the same time, a Polk Street merchant came to a meeting of the San Francisco Interfaith Council and raised a similar concern.

A few blocks from the door of Old First, teenage boys stood on the stretch of Polk Street where older men bought sex. Teenage girls stood on street corners in the Tenderloin, a few blocks away.

Dr. Hull raised awareness of the plight of these young people with his congregation. Old First formed a Polk Street Outreach Committee to consider whether the church should

try to address the needs of kids who found themselves on the street. The committee learned that most of the kids were homeless, neglected, sexually abused, beaten up, and kicked out. Many were not runaways, but throwaways, discards. They were children who had no one to care for them, nowhere to live, and no way to survive without hustling.

"If kids were on the street for more than a month, they got caught up in street life," recalls Jean Richardson, a seminary intern at Old First in 1981. "They had no money, no permanent residence, no job skills, and they hadn't completed school. Once they began receiving money through survival sex or drug dealing, we couldn't tell them it was just as profitable to work at McDonald's—because it wasn't." But McDonald's was safer.

Could Outreach and Counseling Reduce Juvenile Prostitution and Homelessness?

In the fall of 1981, Old First hosted the first of many Polk Street Town Hall community meetings. Neighbors, merchants, members of the religious community, and street kids met in working groups on such topics as health, safety, housing, substance abuse, sexual minority youth, and prostitution. A steering committee was formed to seek solutions.

Old First leaders were comfortable nurturing this group and launching it as a free-standing nonprofit organization, independent of the church's control. Earlier Old First generations had started San Francisco's first public school, organized its first YMCA, and launched the Edgewood Center for Children and Families.

Jean Richardson, who became the church's associate pastor, and Jon Herzstam, a young mental health and substance abuse counselor at the San Francisco Health Department, led the Polk Street Town Hall steering committee. From the fall of 1981 to

1982

Steering committee continues Town Hall meetings, raises awareness and funds.

1983, this group raised awareness and a small amount of funds, almost entirely from the religious community. By January 1983, Larkin Street Youth Services (initially named Polk Street Town Hall) was formally incorporated. Herzstam and Richardson were elected Larkin Street's first board chair and vice chair.

Jon Herzstam's tenure was cut short. "One day Jon and I were driving on Van Ness Avenue. We were going to the Marina Green to have a picnic," Jean Richardson remembers. "And Jon said, 'Jean, there's this terrible disease. It's a plague.' I said, 'You're crazy.' Soon after that, we learned the news about the first cases in New York City of the disease we now call AIDS. There was no treatment then. Jon was one of the first 60 victims of AIDS in San Francisco." In early 1984, Richardson succeeded Herzstam as board chair, a position she would hold for four years.

Old First enabled Richardson to devote 30 percent of her time to Larkin Street. More than any other person, she held the grassroots group together and kept it moving forward in its early years.

Polk Street and the Tenderloin were not the only places where startling numbers of youth were on the street. Homeless teenagers were at Times Square in New York City, on the Boston Common, on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood, near Pike Place Market in Seattle, and in other cities.

In 1983, four San Francisco nonprofits—Youth Advocates, Inc. (now Huckleberry Youth Programs), Central City Hospitality House, Catholic Charities CYO, and URSA Institute—



Polk Street Art Fair

formed a consortium and secured a 12-month, nonrenewable federal demonstration grant, one of six awarded nationally. The purpose of the grant was to determine whether a program of outreach and counseling could have a positive impact on juvenile homelessness and prostitution. The agencies provided services at three locations, but none was in the Polk Gulch area, where most adolescent male prostitution was occurring. Larkin Street sought to fill this void.

Larkin Street joined the consortium and obtained a commitment of \$70,000 from the City of San Francisco and \$22,000 in additional funding to supplement the one-time federal grant. City funds covered the cost of leasing space for a multiservice drop-in center near Polk Street and for two staff positions: an administrative assistant and a community relations coordinator. Jean Richardson recruited a seminary intern. The other agencies contributed the program staff.

Board member Chuck Olson searched the neighborhood for a site for a center where kids could access services offered by the consortium. The choice came down to a second floor location on Polk Street and a storefront on Larkin Street. Believing that abused and exploited kids would not walk up long stairs and that it would be better to be located near, but not in, the place where the drug dealing and exploitation were occurring, the board chose the storefront. Olson persuaded the building owner that he should lease space for a drop-in center for street youth and that a startup with a paltry bank account and no operating history could pay the rent.

1983

Larkin Street Youth Services
is incorporated.



1984 – 1988

Helping Kids from a Storefront

Larkin Street Youth Center opened in January 1984 at 1040 Larkin, a site ideally located to enable outreach teams to engage youth on the street in both the Polk Gulch and the nearby Tenderloin. At the same time, a partner organization, Catholic Charities CYO, opened the Diamond Youth Shelter in the Haight-Ashbury. The shelter had 20 beds for emergency, short-term housing. Initially, the shelter was in the basement of a church on Diamond Street. It later moved to a building on Central Avenue built in 1905 as a laundry.

“Larkin Street’s hours were 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. The Diamond Youth Shelter was open from 10 p.m. to 10 a.m.,” recalls Jean Richardson. “We offered a safe refuge, counseling, and referrals during the day. Then we gave kids bus fare so they could get to Diamond. In the morning, the kids could come back to Larkin Street. It was awkward at best. Later on, we were able to transport kids from one site to another in vans.”

Almost immediately, the five-agency consortium proved that establishing trusting relationships, restoring hope, and offering a positive alternative to street life could work. The staff and volunteers engaged kids on the street and provided individual and group counseling, food vouchers, and referrals for housing and job training by partner organizations. Soon, a tiny medical clinic, staffed by San Francisco Department of Public Health professionals, provided basic care and referrals. An on-site school, led by a San Francisco Unified School District teacher, offered assessments and individual instruction.



Jon Herzstam elected
board chair (1983–1984).

Larkin Street joins five-agency
youth services consortium.

The Larkin Street Model:

"The Wave of the Future."

Observers hailed Larkin Street's innovative approach. The *Christian Science Monitor* described Larkin Street's early success in an article entitled "New Approach to Aiding Runaways is Keeping Many Off the Street." Too often, the article said, a community's solution was to "deport" homeless kids by giving them a one-way bus ticket home.

Before Larkin Street, the *Monitor* continued, San Francisco provided services to homeless kids only in an emergency, an attempted suicide, or a drug overdose; and then the services were piecemeal. Homeless kids rarely attempted the social service maze. They didn't know how or they were wary of being sent to jail or back home. What made Larkin Street different was that it sent outreach workers into the streets to build rapport and offer options:

Except for a few scattered services like overnight shelters or halfway houses, the United States has no social-service network specifically for homeless teenagers. And Larkin Street's success as a multi-service program—backed by political support in the community—has been called the "wave of the future" for homeless youth.

The *Christian Science Monitor*,
November 15, 1984

Roger, who was a client some years later, explained how the multiservice approach helped him: "Drop-In has been a really positive experience for me. I like hanging out there, and the counselors are easy to talk to. All the different services are also really helpful. I am taking classes at the school and hope to get my GED."

In the first six months, the staff made 800 contacts with kids on the street and provided counseling to 137. Over three-quarters of the youth who met with counselors four times or more broke free from the street. Some were able to return to their home communities. Others found the stable housing or the jobs they needed to begin productive lives. Word of mouth spread on the street.

"We proved they are reachable."

With this start, the Larkin Street Youth Center began to develop public support. But it still lacked funds to stay open beyond December 1984, when the federal demonstration grant would expire. San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein had backed the City's initial funding. She had also attended Larkin Street's formal opening earlier in the year. But City agencies were divided. Some argued that San Francisco had no responsibility for kids from other communities; they questioned whether San Francisco could obtain reimbursement for the cost of caring for these kids from their home communities.

Russell Zellers, who directed the Larkin Street Youth Center at the time and headed a subcommittee of the Mayor's Criminal Justice Council, pointed out that most of the teenagers were fleeing homes where they had been sexually or otherwise physically abused.

1984

Catholic Charities opens
Diamond Youth Shelter, 20-bed
emergency shelter.

Many suffered from mental health or substance abuse problems. "These young people are not going to disappear," Zellers told the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "They will not go away." Without help, many would eventually need more costly City services or end up in jail or in other high-cost institutions.

Greg Day, a Larkin Street staff member, later told the *San Francisco Examiner*, "Public agencies said that the street population was unreachable. Well, we reached out and we proved that they are reachable. Even if we have to reach toward the same kid again and again, isn't it worth it if we save one human life?"

In an editorial, "Save the Larkin Street Center," the *Examiner* noted, "Larkin Street, with its single location and range of services—counseling, shelter by day, medical care and food vouchers, help in finding housing and jobs—is an effective program." The editorial pointed to the irony that "the one safe haven—one hope for kids to get off the street before it destroys them"—was about to close when the federal grant ran out.

Mayor Feinstein overruled objections and supported the Center. In her 1984 State of the City address, she highlighted its initial success. She successfully urged the City's Board of Supervisors to provide funds to enable the Center to remain open for the balance of the fiscal year. Without this crucial support, Larkin Street's history would have been brief indeed.

As a grassroots start-up, Larkin Street had been able to secure funding and open the Center only by joining hands with more seasoned youth services organizations. Other agencies contributed the entire program staff—a program manager, outreach workers, and



Mayor Dianne Feinstein at Larkin Street Youth Center opening



Rev. Jean Richardson elected board chair (1984–1988).

Larkin Street Youth Center opens, offers outreach, Drop-In Center, counseling, medical clinic and referrals.

counselors. Within the first 18 months of operations, however, differing agency philosophies and operational unwieldiness splintered the consortium. Some agencies began to withdraw their staff, and Larkin Street decided to take on full administrative and clinical responsibility for the program effective July 1985.

A Tragedy and an Opportunity: “We were going to make it happen for the kids, regardless.”



The loss of the more experienced agencies and staff severely tested Larkin Street's leadership. Among the losses was Larkin Street's part-time executive director, Rev. Kathleen Jimenez, who served for a short time in 1985. Fortunately, an executive director named Jed Emerson signed on in November of that year. A rail-thin, 26-year-old chain smoker with a signature black leather jacket, jeans, boots, and no car, Emerson had street credibility. He also had a master's degree in social work and had served on a team of consultants that the Presbyterian Church USA had supplied to advise Larkin Street on its options a few months earlier. Emerson poured heart and soul into stabilizing Larkin Street and moving its mission forward.

“It was a very tough start,” Emerson recalls. “Our goals clearly outstripped our capacity. But as a start-up, it was more important that we have a passion for the kids and for creating opportunities for them than we be a ‘professional’ organization. We had this absolute determination that, even if everyone told us we wouldn’t succeed, we were going to make it happen for the kids, regardless.”

Within six months of Emerson's arrival, a late-night fire devastated the Center and took the life of the custodian, Jose Castro. Emerson and the board urgently sought

1985

Larkin Street takes on full responsibility for program.

Pilot program helps youth exit street life; Mayor Dianne Feinstein backs funding to keep program open.

a temporary location and emergency funds. Larkin Street clients responded by mounting a vigil in front of the burned-out storefront. The Center had been their refuge and their hope for a better future, and they appealed for public support to enable it to reopen. Their signs and posters also memorialized Jose Castro, who had shot pool with them in the Drop-In Center and conversed in Spanish with the Latino kids.

Joseph was one of the young people holding vigil. He told the *San Francisco Examiner*, "I'm not afraid to say who I am. The people here at the center really helped me. I don't walk the streets anymore. I've been off drugs about three months. I've been a hustler since I was 10."

Also interviewed outside the burned-out Center was 17-year-old Alissa, who had run away from her parents two years earlier: "I came here looking for help when I was cold out on the streets," she told the *Chronicle*. "They got me back in school and got me talking to my parents. I feel bad because this was the only place for me to go."

"The fire set us back," says Emerson, "but it created opportunities for us, too. Before the fire, we were seen as just a storefront, not a true social service agency. The media coverage gave us a stronger base of support in the city. People knew who we were and what our mission was, and they started returning my calls."

The Center reopened temporarily in Larkin Street's administrative office two doors up the block. A neighboring tenant vacated an adjacent storefront because of smoke and fire damage, and new financial support eventually enabled Larkin Street to rebuild and expand into adjacent space.

Rev. Kathleen Jimenez becomes executive director (1985).



Jed Emerson becomes executive director (1985-1989).

Recalls Emerson, "The additional space allowed us to enlarge the Drop-In Center and the medical clinic and to have private space for counseling. And for the first time, we had adequate space for our education program."

A Powerful Advocate: "These kids aren't on a Tom Sawyer adventure."

The added space was much needed. By the late 1980s, more kids were waking up in abandoned buildings or doorways, in many cases the products of ill-equipped parents or families devastated by alcohol, drugs, or poverty. Some kids on the street were hard-core cases, impossible for parents to discipline, but not as many as one might expect. "An increasing number of parents simply can't cope, emotionally or economically, with raising children," Emerson told the *San Diego Union* in 1986. "Some of [these kids] come from families that are under extreme economic pressure, who can't afford to feed them. Also, some of these kids are gay, or they've expressed confusion about their sexuality. The parents say, 'Oh, my God, we've got a queer,' and they evict the kid. As far as they're concerned, they don't have a son anymore."

"These kids aren't on a Tom Sawyer adventure," Emerson continued. "Most have been abused. Increasingly we're seeing serious emotional disorders. Many of these kids are terrified to go home. They're afraid for their lives."

Life on the street was becoming tougher than ever. One study reported that about half the kids on the street bartered their bodies to survive and 35 percent were involved in intravenous drug use. The crack cocaine epidemic, which was devastating families across the country, made the street increasingly violent.

1986

On-site school opens with teacher
provided by school district.

The charismatic Emerson was a powerful advocate for street kids. Mike Kennedy, who held key clinical and program positions at Larkin Street from 1988 to 2001, says, "Jed put the issue out there. He'd be right on the street in his leather jacket talking about street kids, and the news cameras would be there."

Emerson, Greg Day and other staff members promoted a public policy agenda as a natural extension of the agency's work with street kids. They testified before city commissions and state boards. On two occasions, Emerson appeared before California's Little Hoover Commission, which recommended in 1990 that the state increase its support for nonprofit programs serving street kids. The commission pointed to estimates that \$873 in state support would pay for shelter, food, counseling, and medical care for one youth for one year; compared with a state cost of \$4,000 for custodial care or foster care, or \$27,000 for incarceration. Between 1988 and 1990, Larkin Street's work received exposure in such national media as the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Newsweek*, CNN, *Psychology Today* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Street-Based AIDS Education and Prevention

Larkin Street was one of the first organizations in the country to conduct street-based HIV/AIDS prevention outreach to kids. Outreach workers sought to intervene creatively at the point of contact with kids who were working the street. They explained the risks of HIV/AIDS and how to use condoms and clean needles with bleach. Emerson recalls that teaching these practices was incredibly controversial with some groups, but Larkin Street's stance was that the agency had to do more than try to bring kids into programs that would

"An Outmanned Battle"

"Larkin Street's tireless staff . . . is fighting an outmanned battle with scant government ammunition."

Newsweek, April 25, 1988

Fire destroys Drop-In Center; youth hold vigil and appeal to community.

Larkin Street rebuilds and expands space and services.

help them escape the street. Larkin Street urgently needed to help kids protect themselves and stay alive.

Diane Flannery, who joined Larkin Street as program director in 1988, credits the agency for its willingness to struggle with the ethical dilemmas entailed in street kids' activities and HIV and to do what was right for the kids "The early work done by Jed set the stage for the organization to emerge as an international leader in HIV/AIDS for youth," she affirms. "At the time, most youth organizations were not dealing with the crisis. Jed took a lot of criticism for wanting to test kids, educate them about AIDS, and hand out condoms, which was radical for its time."

After Care: Larkin Street's First Program for Youth 18 and Over

In 1988, Larkin Street launched After Care, its first program designed to serve young people 18 and over. Most funders saw 18 year olds as adults. But developmentally they were not adults, as board member Ray Brown relates: "We began to realize that it isn't okay to take an 18-year-old boy and put him into a facility for men. He might be 18, but he is still very much a child."

Much of the impetus for After Care came from the compelling need to help young adults with HIV/AIDS and to prevent the spread of the virus. After Care was also the first Larkin Street program designed to meet the needs of the broader population of homeless youth 18 and over.

1987

Larkin Street offers one of country's first
street-based HIV education and prevention
programs for youth.

After Care initially was staffed by one counselor and 11 volunteers. The program was geared to help youth become self-sufficient. In the first year, 68 percent of After Care clients made it off the street. Almost half were placed in jobs and were living independently. About a quarter were reunited with their families.

Despite its progress, Larkin Street was still a hand-to-mouth organization. Former treasurer Irene Holmes recalls, “Jed and I used to sit down and figure out which bills we could pay, because there was a constant cash shortage. We’d figure out how much we’d be short for the month, and Jed would go out and try to raise the money.”

The Right Leaders at the Right Time

Since the beginning, Larkin Street has been blessed with passionate, talented, dedicated, and innovative leaders. Each team at the board, executive and senior management levels was appropriate to the challenges of its time, and each did its part to set the stage for the next leaders to lead the agency to still greater accomplishments.

Two leaders who joined the board during the late 1980s were Pat Norman, a clinical psychologist and community activist, and Penelope Douglas, a young human resources professional. Norman helped steer the agency through the difficult period that followed the breakup of the five-agency consortium in 1985. When Jean Richardson completed her term as board chair in 1988, Norman succeeded her. Norman served briefly as chair and was followed by Penelope Douglas in 1989. Douglas worked to strengthen the board. “The first several years were really hard,” she recalls. “It was not an easy job.”



1989 – 1993

From Struggling to Survive to Coping with Rapid Growth

When Emerson hired Diane Flannery as program director in 1988, her charter was to bring greater professionalism to Larkin Street. The runner-up for the position was Mike Kennedy. Flannery hired him as clinical coordinator. Both had strong clinical backgrounds. Nine months later, Emerson stepped down, and the board appointed Flannery executive director. Kennedy became program director.

Flannery and Kennedy worked hard to raise standards for delivering and managing services. Recalls Flannery, “Larkin Street was still very grassroots, raw, not professionalized.” She and Kennedy insisted on service plans and client files and imposed professional standards and structure. Progress came, but it was difficult and painful. Some staff had to go, and in 1990 several filed complaints with the City’s Human Rights Commission alleging discrimination. Eventually, the charges were determined to be unfounded, but Flannery describes that 18-month period as “probably one of the most difficult times for me personally.”

Roxane White, who came to Larkin Street as a seminary intern in 1985, stayed on eight years. She served in street outreach, conducted HIV prevention groups, enhanced the volunteer program, and led funds development. She would later serve as Larkin Street’s associate director and, ultimately, as executive director. “I took the development job because Jed and Diane said, ‘We can’t make payroll, and you can write,’” White remembers.

It would take all that these leaders and their colleagues could muster to hold Larkin Street together through the tough challenges to come.

1988

Media exposure in
New York Times, *USA Today*,
CNN, *Newsweek*.

Some of Larkin Street's challenges were internal. Once such challenge came soon after Diane Flannery became executive director. "The person we had doing the books deleted the general ledger the day he left," she explains. "It was a mess. I took the checkbook home and I kept the books for the first year because I was afraid to let anyone else do it. But over time, we built a finance department." Flannery notes that good fiscal management has been important to Larkin Street's success. Kriss Deiglmeier was the agency's key financial professional in the early nineties. In later years, Denise Wells, Cheryl Barth and others would serve Larkin Street well in this role.

Flannery adds, "I was able to build because of the good reputation Jed created. If you called as the director of Larkin Street, anyone would talk with you. Everybody wanted to be part of the glow."

"We'll protect the kids, but we're not protecting the adults."

One who wanted to be part of the glow was "Don." A wealthy real estate developer and a well-connected community figure, "Don" contacted Jed Emerson about providing a building and resources for a residential program. They toured a former auto dealership as a possible site, and "Don" spoke of making a large donation.

A few months later, "Don" came to the Drop-In Center, wrote a \$15,000 check and gave it to Flannery. That same evening, Flannery recalls, "One of the kids came in and said, 'How do you know "Don"?' I thought, 'How do you know "Don" is the better question.'"



"We were pretty excited. Oh, God, a brand new building," Mike Kennedy continues. "I said, 'It can't be the same guy in the gold Porsche I saw picking up kids.' But, of course, it was. So we pulled out of the deal and gave him his money back."

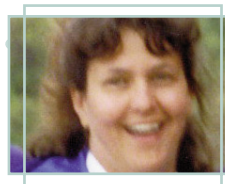
Johns like "Don" were brazenly picking up child prostitutes, both boys and girls, on Polk Street and even in front of the Drop-In Center. The police department was cracking down on underage prostitution by targeting the johns. "Don" was charged with 21 felony counts of unlawful sex with kids as young as 13 and furnishing them with crack cocaine. A later indictment added a charge of trying to bribe a pregnant 17 year old not to testify, Kennedy recalls, "'Don' was offering bribes, and the DA was wiring kids [to record bribery attempts]. The case was in the media constantly because he was such a high-profile guy." Flannery adds that both Larkin Street staff and clients testified before the grand jury: "We had to keep the kids drug free and off the street so they could testify. For 24 hours a day, we took turns and sat in the Larkin Street Youth Center, making sure they didn't use drugs. There were threats made against us."

In 1990, nearly a year after his indictment, "Don" pleaded guilty to some of the charges and was fined \$300,000. The City donated the money to Larkin Street in recognition of its support for victims of predators like "Don." "We used the money to lease apartments for clients and for a van for outreach," remembers White. "The whole situation on Polk Street changed after that," Flannery says, "but it took its toll on a lot of people."

Looking back, Kennedy, White, and Flannery observe that it was radical for a youth service organization to cooperate with police at the time, and it was a topic of intense debate

1989

Diane Flannery becomes
executive director (1989-1993).



within the staff. Some outreach workers and counselors viewed adults in authority through the eyes of youth, and they contended that clients needed to be protected from them. Ultimately, as Flannery puts it, the decision was “If kids are going to break the rules with adults, we’ll protect the kids, but we’re not protecting the adults.” Larkin Street went on to forge protocols of cooperation with the police department and the district attorney’s office.

Fighting an Epidemic: “One surgeon in the city wouldn’t operate without a helmet and a bio suit.”

“AIDS hit us like a ton of rocks,” says Flannery. “It was always thought of as an adult disease, but now it was beginning to hit kids.” Attitudes surrounding AIDS at the time were



clouded by fear and stigma. Kennedy recalls, “There were all kinds of arguments about how HIV spread. One surgeon in the city wouldn’t operate without a helmet and a bio suit. There were no antiretroviral drugs yet, and no one knew what to do with HIV-positive kids. We were

working with all these infected kids, and we had staff that got infected, too. Literally, I had nightmares.”



Penelope Douglas
elected board chair (1989–1993).

HIV and substance abuse
prevention services expanded.

Among the victims were Larkin Street's medical director, Ken Dunnigan, M.D., and Zach Long, a beloved board member. In 1991, the City's Department of Public Health reported the results of a yearlong survey: Over 13 percent of homeless male youth tested positive for HIV. This infection rate was so much higher than in other cities that the Centers for Disease Control sent investigators to San Francisco. Later estimates climbed as high as 25 percent.

Kennedy and Flannery forged collaborations with the City's Department of Public Health and San Francisco General Hospital. Experts helped develop intervention models and train staff. As in earlier years, many of Larkin Street's strategies—teaching kids prevention, confidential HIV testing, needle exchanges, and placing HIV positive youth in scattered-site rental units—were highly controversial. But they proved effective.

Every week, Flannery says, Larkin Street received calls from around the country asking about Larkin Street's HIV program. In response, the staff published a manual on HIV and homeless youth in 1990. The U.S. Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop, approved the manual and wrote its introduction. In 1991–92, Larkin Street hosted one international conference on AIDS and street youth and collaborated on another. Flannery recalls, "We designed some of the first educational programs for youth in the world. Many programs across the country designed their programs after Larkin's."

In 1992, the agency embarked on a five-year relationship with researchers at Columbia University to study HIV prevention and treatment, the first of three partnerships with leading teaching hospitals. In the same year, an expanded After Care program provided Tenderloin apartments and case management and referral services to 54 HIV-positive youth.

1990

Larkin Street publishes
*HIV and Homeless Youth:
Meeting the Challenge.*

President honors Larkin Street with
1,000 Points of Light Award.

Still, as Mike Kennedy remembers, without the medications that exist today, “Kids were getting sick really fast, to the point that we wrote a grant to the Magic Johnson Foundation for money for funerals. It was one of the first grants they gave.”

Helping More Young People in Four Months Than in All of 1990

Other trends hammered Larkin Street as well. In 1990 and 1991, the U.S. economy suffered from both inflation and high unemployment. Mike Kennedy told the *Chronicle* that most of the children on the street were now chronically homeless—in large part because of disintegrated or wholly dysfunctional families. More parents rejected their kids. If they returned home, they often would be back on the street in three weeks. Crisis intervention and short-term help until kids could be reunited with their families were not the solution.

More and more young people seeking services were refugees from Central America who spoke little or no English and had no family support in the U.S. Clients flooded the expanded medical clinic and the counseling program. To better serve Latino youth, Larkin Street hired Spanish-speaking outreach workers and case managers and conducted cross-cultural training. In the first four months of 1991, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that Larkin Street helped more young people than in all of 1990.

Organizational Evolution: “A lot of hard growing.”

Thanks to growing recognition for Larkin Street’s cutting-edge work on HIV and the fundraising skills of board member Mary Lester and associate director Roxane White,



Roy Francies,
Volunteer.

Many agencies across U.S. model
HIV programs on Larkin Street’s.

Volunteering at Larkin Street

Each year ordinary people of extraordinary dedication and compassion contribute thousands of hours of volunteer service (about 18,000 hours annually). Their efforts enrich each of Larkin Street’s programs. President George H. W. Bush recognized Larkin Street’s volunteer program as the 244th Point of Light in 1990.

The agency matches community members with meaningful opportunities. For longtime volunteers Gerry Hill and Maryalice Kelley, that means providing home-style meals every week. For other volunteers, it means mentoring kids, tutoring, working with young people in the day labor program or in the computer lab, or putting on a clothing drive for business-appropriate clothes for youth who work or are interviewing. Corporate, college, and community teams do one-day projects to improve Larkin Street facilities.

Roy Francies, who has volunteered in the Drop-In Center for 17 years, says, “I wanted to help the kids have fun in a safe place and let them know that there are people in the community who care about them. These kids are amazing. I’ve found that I receive so much by giving here.”

In 2007, the board established the Jay Cuetara Volunteer of the Year Award to honor an outstanding volunteer. It is a difficult task to select just one.

the agency progressed from struggling to survive to serving increasing numbers of clients and coping with rapid growth.

"It was a tumultuous time," remembers Mary Lester. "We were growing so fast," recalls board member Henry Safrit. "There was no long-range planning or agreement on what we wanted to be doing. It created a lot of tension on the board and between the board and the staff." Board member Ray Brown says, "I looked at it as organizational adolescence, an organizational identity crisis."

Board chair Penelope Douglas was leading the board in an evolution from a hands-on, grassroots operating board toward a policy-making and governance board. John Kalin, a board leader, observes, "It was like a course on organizational development, growth, and evolution." James Canales, who joined the board in 1992, recalls, "I felt like I was joining the board right at the moment of transition. People had very different views on issues, and I remember feeling a lot of tension. There was a lot of hard growing."

An Outcome-Focused Mission Statement: Helping Young People Exit the Street Permanently

One of the sources of tension was deep division within the board and staff over the way that Larkin Street could best help its young people. The reality was that many clients could not return home. Many leaders felt that Larkin Street was offering a band-aid approach that enabled kids to stay on the street— "taking care of kids in crisis, meeting emergency needs, and helping them stay safe," as Penelope Douglas describes it. Mary Lester and other board colleagues wanted to be more than "do-gooders." These leaders maintained that

1991

Services to Latino youth
strengthened; each department
has bilingual staff.

Larkin Street's mission should be to help kids get off the streets *permanently*. Others contended that street life was what clients had chosen and that changing Larkin Street's approach would risk losing kids.

In 1993, after two years of fervent debate, Larkin Street crafted a mission statement that squarely stated the goal of finding more permanent solutions and inspiring young people to move beyond the streets. With only slight fine-tuning, this mission statement continues to guide Larkin Street today. All who followed the board and staff of 1991-1993 are indebted to those who set a course that no one has questioned since.

The mission clarification and the agency's steps toward professionalization came at a cost. Many staff and volunteers did not want to work in the new framework. In fact, Diane Flannery lost close to 85 percent of her staff. Moreover, the new outcome-focused mission compelled Larkin Street to hold itself accountable for results that were difficult to achieve. Implicit in the new mission was the commitment to provide intermediate and long-term housing, education, and jobs. Larkin Street set out to meet this challenge.

One Miss and a Giant Step Forward

To help kids move beyond the streets, Larkin Street launched a foster care program in 1993, beginning with a four-bed home for Latino youth. As Mary Lester recalls, some kids from Central America were selling street drugs to help support families back home: "We were dealing with a whole different kid here. They had to have a place to be." Although the foster care initiative continued, in time Larkin Street decided that it was not the answer. As board member Phil Estes puts it, "It was better than nothing, but it didn't work."

Larkin Street Youth Services' Mission Statement

Larkin Street Youth Services' mission is to create a continuum of services that inspires youth to move beyond the streets. We will nurture potential, promote dignity, and support bold steps by all.

“Who Knew I’d End Up Going to Cornell?”

In 1999, four days before receiving his architecture degree, a former Diamond Youth Shelter resident named Will sat down to write a thank-you note. If it were not for Larkin Street, he wrote, “I would have been dead by now—when I came to Diamond, I always thought I wouldn’t see my 18th birthday, but here I am... Who knew I’d end up going to Cornell?”

In a sense, many knew—staff and board members, volunteers, and donors. All share an unshakable belief in the potential of every young person.

That same year, Larkin Street assumed management of the **Diamond Youth Shelter** from Catholic Charities. Diamond had been operating as a 20-bed emergency shelter since 1984. It was run as a collective. For a young person to be accepted, every Diamond counselor had to approve, and they rejected most Larkin Street clients. By assuming management of the shelter program, Larkin Street could offer housing to young people who otherwise would have been turned away.

Acquiring the Diamond program included taking on the Diamond staff, a union staff. The union soon started a campaign to organize Larkin Street employees. The employees ultimately voted not to unionize, but Mike Kennedy still recalls the unionization campaign as another stressful time during a period of crisis upon crisis.

Juma Ventures: “A pebble in the water.”

Even earlier, in 1990, Larkin Street had begun investigating starting a business to provide job training and jobs for clients. “We had this cycle,” Diane Flannery recalls. “Kids would come. We would clean them up and get them jobs, and the jobs would last for three weeks. Then we’d get them another job, and another job. I kept thinking that if we owned our own business, we could keep them employed.” A business feasibility study was done, pilot projects conducted, and a manager hired. Larkin Street applied for and received a Ben & Jerry’s ice cream shop franchise, and Larkin Business Ventures was incorporated.

In time, however, some board members concluded, as former treasurer Stephen Koch explains, that the business venture, while a worthy project, “was not going to serve home-

1992

Five-year relationship with
Columbia University to study HIV
prevention and treatment.

less youth, and our core mission was serving homeless youth.” In 1993, after a difficult dialogue, the board decided to spin off the business venture.

Diane Flannery left Larkin Street to become CEO of the spin-off organization in 1993, and Penelope Douglas became its board chair. Jed Emerson, who then headed the Roberts Foundation’s Homeless Economic Development Fund, was instrumental not only in providing impetus for the project, but in funding it for years. The spin-off, now named Juma Ventures, continues as a successful nonprofit helping disadvantaged San Francisco youth obtain summer and part-time employment. As Jean Richardson observes, “One thing great organizations do is they have a good idea, then birth it and spin it off. It’s like a pebble in the water.”

Leadership Transitions

25

When Diane Flannery left Larkin Street, it was a well-funded organization with an outstanding clinical reputation for its work with at-risk kids. On Flannery’s departure in 1993, associate director Roxane White was promoted to executive director.

In January 1994, Mary Lester succeeded Penelope Douglas as board chair. Lester was an enormously instrumental leader in Larkin Street’s successes during the 1990s and beyond. Like Irene Holmes earlier, she had come to Larkin Street as a Junior League volunteer. Lester began in the Drop-In Center and later worked in street outreach. Fellow volunteer and later board colleague Phil Estes met her at the Drop-In Center:

After Care program provides
housing, case management to 54
HIV-positive youth.

"Mary was charming, engaging, personally compelling. She had a really nice way of relating to the young people and staff."

Lester mentored both board colleagues and senior staff. Recalls Roxane White, "Mary was absolutely inspiring. She would have me over for lunch on bad days. We would eat tuna sandwiches and talk strategy."

In addition to her personal generosity and that of her husband, Howard, Mary was a deeply committed champion of Larkin Street who led fundraising efforts that helped support the agency's growth and expansion. Phil Estes, Jim Canales and others who served beside Lester credit her with helping to take the board to a higher level of effectiveness.

In 1994, a new position for Roxane White's husband took her to Colorado, and Larkin Street began a national search for a new executive director who would lead the organization into its second decade of service.

1994 – 2003

Becoming the Modern Larkin Street: Long-Term Solutions for Homeless Youth

The 1994 executive director opening came when Larkin Street was at a critical juncture. Jim Canales, who chaired the executive director search committee, recalls: "We were focusing on implementing our new mission statement, our tenth anniversary was coming up, and board members were ready to elevate their sights." The search committee selected Anne Stanton, the associate executive director of another pioneering organization, Covenant House, in New York City. She became Larkin Street's executive director in 1994.

1993

Outcome-focused mission statement adopted.

Roxane White becomes executive director (1993-1994).



Stanton had expertise not only in providing comprehensive services to help young people create new futures, but also in designing and building the organizational structures needed to deliver those services. “Anne was the right combination of visionary and practical implementation manager,” says a later board member, Jay Cuetara. “She could see it, and then she could make sure it got done.” In the nine years that Stanton served as executive director, Larkin Street would dramatically expand the services needed to provide long-term solutions for homeless youth. “Anne was the architect of the modern Larkin Street,” Phil Estes observes. “She was the driving force. Between her, Mary Lester, and Jim Canales, okay, we win.”

“She gave the agency a real jolt and energized it,” recalls Mike Kennedy. She set high standards for everybody, including staff, board and youth. Explains Stanton: “Our role is not to allow young people to feel like victims. Our goal is to empower them by giving them a sense of what is possible. Expectations have to be centered on what the young people will need five or six years from now. Our work should be building toward helping them create success. I have the highest expectations for young people because I believe they can achieve them, and that had to be the driving culture.”

A Former Pet Shop Becomes a New Gateway on Haight Street

By the end of 1994, the agency opened the **Haight Street Referral Center**, a new gateway program in the Haight-Ashbury. Larkin Street needed to be where the young people were. As Stanton puts it, to ask homeless youth in the Haight-Ashbury to cross the city to

Larkin Street spins off
Larkin Business Ventures, now
Juma Ventures.

Larkin Street assumes management
of Diamond Youth Shelter.



Larkin Street was “like asking them to go to Mars.” Mike Kennedy found an empty pet shop on Haight Street, five blocks from the Diamond Youth Shelter: “Anne, some staff, and I went there with chainsaws and cut up what needed to come out, got a big dumpster, painted, and in three weeks we had it open.”

Daniel Pitasky, a former staff member and a participant in the demolition and painting crew, remembers that the pet shop specialized in lizards. He and other staff members met at the site to discuss the potential for the new space. Sitting amid empty aquariums, Pitasky wondered how many snakes had escaped and might surprise the new occupants.

The Haight Street Referral Center provides a safe, welcoming environment, case management, individual and group counseling, snacks, and health screening, including HIV testing. Larkin Street’s outreach teams were already on the frontlines in the Haight. What the Referral Center gave young people was an access point that was sensitive to their culture and a place where they could make a deeper connection with Larkin Street and take that critical first step off the street. The impact was immediate: In 1994–95, the number of youth served by Diamond Youth Shelter increased 25 percent. In the 2007–08 year, the Referral Center was the point of entry for over 1,500 young people who accessed Larkin Street’s services.

Stable Housing Makes Stable Lives Possible

In 1996, Larkin Street opened its first transitional living program, **Avenues to Independence**, a major step forward in creating lasting alternatives to street life for young

1994

Anne Stanton becomes
executive director (1994–2003).



people aged 18 to 24. Older youth on the street represent a widely underserved group who are at risk of joining the adult homeless population. At 18, they have aged out of foster care and other traditional youth services, and yet few are ready to live on their own and support themselves. Stable housing is essential to stable lives, and Avenues to Independence offers that stability.

Avenues is located in a former convalescent center that Mike Kennedy found on Haight Street. Mary Lester secured furniture and kitchen equipment. Young people stay for 6 to 18 months. The program serves up to 15 at a time. Larkin Street engages them in career counseling and provides opportunities to advance their education. Residents learn skills essential to a successful transition to self-sufficient adult life, such as opening a bank account, budgeting, and cooking—skills most young people learn from their families.

Avenues residents pay 30 percent of their monthly income as “rent.” These funds then are returned upon graduation and serve as a nest egg that enables graduates to obtain permanent housing. With help in overcoming two major obstacles to self-sufficiency—homelessness and joblessness—90 percent of Avenues graduates secured permanent housing and independence in the program’s first year.

Jose was an Avenues to Independence resident who had been homeless since age 14. As he spoke of what he learned at Avenues, he beamed: “ATI was a great experience for me. As a result, I am much more confident in what I can accomplish.” By the close of his stay at Avenues, Jose was an assistant supervisor at Safeway and had signed a lease for his own apartment.

Larkin Street Modeled In Portland

The board of directors of a Portland, Oregon, nonprofit serving homeless youth searched for an outcome-based program model to bring to their city. After researching programs in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and other cities, the group selected Larkin Street’s program as the one they wanted to emulate. Larkin Street’s emphasis on intensive case management relationships with kids and on education and job training appealed to them.

They requested Larkin Street to develop a program for Portland. The group then asked Mike Kennedy for a recommendation for a program director. He suggested Larkin Street staff member Daniel Pitasky. Pitasky’s program, New Avenues for Youth, opened its doors in 1997.

Foster Care program begins with four-bed home for Latino youth.



Mary Lester elected board chair (1994–1997).

Haight Street Referral Center provides gateway in the Haight.

Art With Purpose

Betty Soo Hoo, a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) manager, wanted to brighten a corridor of the Powell Street BART and MUNI station. She learned of Peter Carpou, Larkin Street's arts program director, and offered him a commission to display kids' art.

Peter Carpou came to Larkin Street as a volunteer in 1988. He brought in art materials and worked with kids one day a week in the Drop-In Center. It was soon clear that his true art—genius, actually—is his ability to connect with kids and to use art to build trust, self-esteem, and hope; to engage kids in broader Larkin Street services; and to change lives. Carpou joined the staff and has directed the Larkin Street art program ever since.

Carpou has never had adequate space for his work, but he has more than made up for that with personal commitment. Jed Emerson says, "I can still remember Peter standing there surrounded by kids, organizing art projects in the tiny Drop-In Center and the incredible focus he had on why it was important."

For the BART art project, 309 kids created 96 mosaic panels, each 4 feet by 2 feet. The exhibit opened in 1995 as a temporary installation, but a dramatic reduction in graffiti and crime there led to a decision to keep the mosaics on display permanently.

Larkin Street's arts program offers kids powerful outlets for individual and collective expression of their talents and voices. Other permanent installations of their work include a 5-foot-by-65-foot mosaic-and-tile sidewalk mural outside San Francisco's Department of Human Services and a mural at the Union Street branch of Comerica Bank.

For his role in helping troubled adolescents redirect their lives and fashion new paths, a 2003 *San Francisco Chronicle* editorial honored Carpou as an "unsung hero."

A Strategic Plan to Provide a Continuum of Services

In 1996, the agency adopted a five-year strategic plan to continue to fill gaps in its continuum of services to help kids move beyond the streets. The plan included a program strategy and related financial, development and governance strategies.

Assisted Care and After Care Open Doors to Healthier Lives

The next milestone in extending the continuum of care came in 1997 with the opening of the **Assisted Care/After Care** facility at 129 Hyde Street. Larkin Street's After Care program was already a nationally recognized prototype for caring for homeless youth living with HIV and AIDS. Larkin Street enhanced After Care to help HIV-positive youth who lack stable housing but do not need full-time assistance to stabilize their lives and live in the community. It provides a spectrum of services, such as case management, psychosocial support, comprehensive medical care, vouchers for emergency housing, and scattered-site, rent-subsidized apartments. The first floor of 129 Hyde became the new home for these services.

The Assisted Care component, located on the two upper floors, was originally intended to address the needs of young people aged 18 to 24 with late-stage AIDS who need assistance in their everyday lives. They have their own room and share a community area with kitchen and dining facilities and a living and recreation room. The space, colors, and prevalence of light all were designed to create a nurturing and therapeutic environment.

1995



Peter Carpou and 309 youth complete mosaics at Powell BART station.

The facility provides comprehensive 24-hour care, including coordinated medical, psychosocial, and supportive services, such as case management, recreation and counseling. Larkin Street's Assisted Care program was the country's first licensed residential care facility for youth living with HIV/AIDS.

Assisted Care continues to serve young people who need a structured setting to restore their physical and mental health. Soon after Assisted Care opened, however, anti-retroviral drugs enabled Larkin Street to offer new futures to HIV/AIDS patients. With proper medical care and support, hundreds of formerly homeless youth who almost certainly would not have survived street life are living with HIV/AIDS today.

The Assisted Care/After Care facility required an enormous undertaking, including the purchase of the 129 Hyde building and two years of planning, design and renovation. Extensive private fundraising in the community was needed to supplement public grants. Much of this private funding came from the tireless efforts of Mary Lester, who led prospective donors on countless hard hat tours of the building site. "We were making avenues into providing housing, education, and jobs that would help these young people really become part of society," recalls Lester. "Hyde Street was just an incredible project, because it gave us a lot of confidence that we could do it."





Lester's confidence that "we could do it" was well founded. In 1998, a year after opening the Assisted Care/After Care facility, Larkin Street again expanded its services to youth with HIV, by opening the **HIV Specialty Clinic** at 129 Hyde. The clinic features extensive outreach to promote confidential HIV testing of high-risk youth. In addition, specialists in HIV medical care are available, on an outpatient basis, to any HIV-positive San Franciscan between the ages of 12 and 24. Patients receive support that helps them adhere to the complex treatment regimens essential to antiretroviral therapies. They are also eligible to participate in specially designed clinical trials.

The Specialty Clinic operates in partnership with medical providers at the University of California at San Francisco and the San Francisco Department of Public Health. It is staffed by two physicians, a medical assistant, and a registered nurse manager and includes a pharmacy. By centralizing medical, social, and housing services in one location and offering flexible hours, Larkin Street eliminated barriers for youth seeking help to lead healthier lives.

As Larkin Street served more and more young people and provided a wider spectrum of services, including two residential programs, the services required additional skilled professional staff. From 1989 to 1998, Larkin Street's budget grew from \$666,000 to nearly \$4.3 million.

Employment Programs: Providing the Skills for Self-Sufficiency

Larkin Street reached another milestone in 1998, when it unified its educational and employment services for homeless young people over 18 through the **HIRE UP** workforce development initiative. HIRE UP is designed to be a comprehensive program that provides

1996

Avenues to Independence opens,
Larkin Street's first transitional
living program.

the skills and resources necessary for youth to become self-sufficient adults. For most, the first step is three to four weeks in the agency's day labor program that gives immediate, paid employment to all youth who want to work. The day labor program offers street kids a way to obtain cash without selling drugs or engaging in prostitution. They also learn the importance of being on time, following directions, completing projects, and working as part of a team.

The second step in the HIRE UP program is a four-week job readiness course. It prepares youth for employment by helping them identify interests and strengths and learn how to apply for work, how to interview, and how to advance in the workplace. The staff then assists with job searches.

HIRE UP's intensive computer and technology course teaches the skills that employers in the technology sector say they need most. The HIRE UP center includes a state-of-the-art computer lab and a staff that works individually with each youth. Students gain computer and project management skills by completing a client-driven project.

Youth in the HIRE UP program can also pursue a GED and receive academic counseling and help in all aspects of applying for college and obtaining financial aid. Staff and volunteers take youth on tours of nearby universities.

Industry experts lead workshops and offer insight into finding employment and succeeding in the workplace. Mentors from the business community serve as coaches and role models who encourage youth as they pursue their career goals. To ensure a strong first impression, Larkin Street clients are offered professional business clothing that supporters have donated to the agency.

HIRE UP Clients in Their Own Words

"My long-term goal is to become a nurse. I always wanted to do something like that, but never thought I could. When I came to Larkin Street, they helped me to realize that I can do this; I do have the skills and the talent." —Jamyla

"They encouraged me to get my GED and continue with school. Anything you want to do, they are very supportive." —Sandra

"Thank you so much for giving me back me. Before I came to do the GED test, I was spiraling down and now I am back on top." —Rebecca

"They helped me format a resume, interview, and get two jobs. I wouldn't have been able to do this without the Job Readiness Class." —Kim

Based on the results of HIRE UP's first year, in 2001 the program funder, the James Irvine Foundation, made a multiyear commitment to expand educational opportunities and provide industry-specific career training. This funding allowed Larkin Street to develop a new HIRE UP component called the Institute for HIRE Learning. It enables clients to move into a competitive, three-month, career training track to gain specific skills for a career that interests them. Each training track was designed with the help of business leaders on Larkin Street's Business Advisory Councils and includes hands-on training, professional development workshops, networking, and paid internships in local businesses. Often businesses hire youth when their internships end.

In 2007-2008, HIRE UP helped 129 youth find employment at an average hourly wage of \$10.55. That year, 84 percent of day labor participants took advantage of additional HIRE UP services. Thirteen clients were awarded GEDs, 38 re-engaged in high school education through Larkin Street's on-site classroom, and 68 were enrolled in post-secondary education.

A Full-Service Emergency Shelter for Older Youth

Safe housing, including emergency and short-term shelter, longer-term transitional housing, and, ultimately, permanent housing, is essential to help young people escape homelessness. Between 2000 and 2002, Larkin Street opened three more housing programs, one for youth under 18 and two for older youth. Larkin Street's housing sites are separated developmentally to enable each young person to receive appropriate care and attention. For youth under 18, reunification with their families is the primary goal. If that

1997

Assisted Care/After Care is first
U.S. licensed residential facility for youth
living with AIDS.



is not possible, Larkin Street works with each youth to find safe, permanent housing. Older youth receive support services to ensure a successful transition into adulthood.

In 2000, the agency created the **Lark-Inn for Youth**, San Francisco's first and only 24-hour, full-service emergency shelter for young people between the ages of 18 and 24. The Lark-Inn is a 40-bed facility that provides safe, drug-free housing for up to four months. Located in a former Ellis Street nightclub near the Drop-In Center and the Assisted Care/After Care facility, the Lark-Inn includes sleeping areas, a kitchen and dining area, a community living room, laundry facilities, bathrooms, a kennel for pets, and a computer lab and resource center:

Lark-Inn residents have access to Larkin Street's medical, counseling, educational, and employment services. A comprehensive medical checkup is offered to all residents. They work with case managers, who make initial assessments and work with them to develop individual plans that outline short- and long-term goals and specific steps for achieving self-sufficiency. When their Lark-Inn residency ends, clients may reunite with family or establish residency in a transitional living facility, such as Avenues to Independence.

Turning a former basement nightclub into a welcoming, home-like environment required expensive renovations. To supplement funding from the San Francisco Department of Human Services, Larkin Street raised over \$500,000 through its second capital campaign in two years, this one led by John Martin and Larry Colton. In 2007-2008, the Lark-Inn provided 11,870 nights off the street to homeless youth. Nadia, a resident, says, "It's like a college dorm; it doesn't feel like a shelter at all. They try to do youth-oriented things, like go on art trips, go to the museum, go to the symphony, and incorporate San Francisco culture."



James Canales elected
board chair (1997-1999).

Holidays at Larkin Street

Larkin Street tries to make the holiday season special for each of its young people. Starting in 1984, Old First Church and Larkin Street volunteers began giving kids a taste of home at Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations in the fellowship hall where Larkin Street began. Since 2000, Larkin Street has hosted holiday dinners in its own sites.

On Thanksgiving Day 2008, 60 volunteers helped provide a holiday celebration to over 300 youth in the centers and housing programs. At Christmas, gift donations to Larkin Street ensure that over 350 young people receive presents ranging from clothing to gift cards to toiletries. Live performances with guest musicians, gift giving, and the generosity of the volunteers and the community help make the holidays special for Larkin Street youth.





Ellis Street Apartments

Youth-Centered Affordable Housing

In 2001, in collaboration with Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation, Larkin Street opened the **Ellis Street Apartments**, the agency's first permanent housing for youth between the ages of 18 and 24. The apartments provide affordable, permanent housing for up to 24 low-income youth. The apartments are located directly across the street from the Lark-Inn, in a building left vacant after a fire.

Ellis Street was the first youth-centered affordable housing project in the country. Residents pay one-third of their monthly income in rent and accept real-life responsibilities. A case manager is on site, and youth may continue to access Larkin Street's supportive services. Six of the 24 units are reserved for youth diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

Martin, a client at the time the Ellis Street Apartments opened, told the San Francisco City College newspaper, the *Guardian*, "The staff at the Lark-Inn helped us with all the paperwork. I got there the day before and was still like the third person in line, 24 hours before they opened. I stayed there all night." Martin turned in his application and soon received the key to his first apartment.

Saving a Critical Transitional Living Program for Younger Youth

In 2002, the agency opened The **LOFT: Larkin Opportunities for Transition**. Two years earlier, Central City Hospitality House unexpectedly decided to close the doors of the city's only transitional living facility for younger homeless youth, those between 15 and 17. Larkin Street felt it had to do everything it could to save this critical program.

1998

HIV Specialty Clinic offers expanded outpatient services.

Accomplishing this was far from simple, however, and came at a time when the agency already was aggressively expanding. Nonetheless, under the leadership of Anne Stanton and Phil Estes and with strong collaboration from the City, Larkin Street purchased the LOFT building in 2000. After completing renovations and state licensing requirements, the agency reopened the facility.

Located on Moss Street in the South of Market neighborhood, the LOFT is a nine-bed group home that gives a stable, home-like environment to youth who cannot return home because their families are unwilling or unable to care for them. The LOFT's supportive program provides a positive alternative to traditional group homes and foster homes. Each youth prepares and carries out an educational plan to meet personal goals and to develop job readiness skills. Strong emphasis on supportive counseling, life skills, and career assessment and exploration helps residents develop motivation and skills to achieve long-term success.

“Larkin Street is so much more than an address.”

By 2001, the three-year-old HIRE UP education, training, and employment program had outgrown the space available in the storefronts on Larkin Street. The agency leased and remodeled new space around the corner on Sutter Street, next to Larkin Street's new administrative offices. The new base houses HIRE UP's classroom and counseling space, a resource library, cubicles for study and meetings, counseling offices, and a computer lab. Larkin Street also rolled out a new computer training curriculum, developed by volunteers Vince Hoenigman and Carsten Sorensen and team-taught by two Larkin Street technology specialists, both of whom were former clients.



The LOFT

HIRE UP initiative unifies
educational and employment services.



Programs That Work

"The Larkin Street Youth Services are the darlings of San Francisco's homeless services for good reason; they're well funded, thoughtfully designed, and run by professionals. Most importantly, they work. Last year over 80 percent of the young people who completed Larkin Street's comprehensive services left the street for good."

The Guardsman, February 24, 2004

1999

Meanwhile, the economic downturn precipitated by the collapse of the stock market's technology bubble in 2000 and the tragic attacks of September 11, 2001, led to severe funding cutbacks and a challenging period for nonprofits. As Anne Stanton told the *Chronicle* on the eve of the opening of the new HIRE UP facility, the general feeling among Larkin Street staffers was, "Oh, my God, the economy is terrible. How are we going to make this happen?" But the City, foundations, businesses, and individuals "really answered the call," she continued. "It's a very happy feeling."

In 2002, just a year after relocating the HIRE UP program, the agency needed to move the Drop-In Center and all the services offered in the flagship Larkin Street storefronts. In 18 years, the storefronts had grown to four. They housed the drop-in program, lockers, showers, the kitchen area, counseling space, the on-site school, the medical clinic, and the art program. The landlord was unwilling to complete overdue repairs, make needed renovations, or grant a long-term lease to enable Larkin Street to make the improvements. Fortunately, an ideal location was available around the corner; next to HIRE UP, in a space formerly occupied by a furniture store. The space was 50 percent larger than the old site, and it had additional basement storage space.

The new space required \$950,000 in renovations, and Larkin Street would pay monthly rent on two sites totaling \$22,500 for months on end. However, as senior staff member Aron Sumii noted at the time, the Drop-In Center is a gateway to all Larkin Street services. A vastly improved center would "help us to be even more effective in helping kids take the hardest step—their first one off the street." The new Drop-In Center opened in April 2003.



To Stanton, relocating the Drop-In Center was an opportunity not only to enhance services, but also to create a welcoming environment that respects kids the way they should be respected. “Larkin Street is so much more than an address,” Stanton told the *Chronicle*. “It’s the belief we have in youth, and this space really communicates that.”

Casting a Wider Net

In late 2003, Larkin Street expanded its program continuum to include subsidized, supportive housing for youth who are “aging out” of the foster care system. Historically, many of these youth become homeless after leaving foster care because they lack the skills and support to make the transition to independent living. Many ended up in Larkin Street programs. San Francisco had the highest rate of youth in the foster care system in California, and the number of youth aging out of foster care was only expected to increase. The primary element of the new program, later dubbed **LEASE** (Larkin Extended Aftercare for Supported Emancipation), is scattered-site apartments.

Vulnerable youth enter LEASE immediately from foster care—before becoming homeless. They receive housing and access to Larkin Street case management, education, employment, job training, life skills, mental health, and substance abuse services. LEASE was rolled out in 2003 and 2004 with 31 apartments, 21 serving Larkin Street clients and 10 serving clients of an Oakland-based partner organization, First Place Fund for Youth.

In the 10 years following 1993, when Larkin Street adopted the goal of finding solutions that would enable youth to leave the street permanently, the agency created a host of new programs in eight new locations. In those 10 years, its budget grew at an annual rate of



Larkin Street staff at new Drop-In Center, 2003



Phil Estes elected board chair (1999–2003).

Architecture That Works

To turn a basement night club, a film production plant, and a furniture store into bright, airy, welcoming environments for kids, Larkin Street called upon Sam Davis, a U.C. Berkeley architecture professor. Davis specializes in designing spaces for people who otherwise would have no roof over their heads.

"You only have one chance to make a first impression," Davis told the *Chronicle* in 2004. "If homeless people come to a facility that's impersonal, institutional, and threatening, they may just turn around and leave." The environment, Anne Stanton would later say, "sends very clear messages to young people about what you care about, and how you care about them."

Looking around the new Drop-In Center in 2003, 17-year-old Danielle beamed. "The new place is awesome," she told the *Chronicle*. "It makes me feel like people do have hearts, like there are beautiful people in the world who care about strangers."

15 percent. Its continuum of integrated housing and supportive services had become a national prototype for innovative, effective, and lasting solutions. In 2002 alone, Larkin Street's programs received five awards.

Anne Stanton summarizes, "We tried very hard to be an organization driven by excellence." Mike Kennedy observes, "Anne was looking for excellence, and she really changed the agency. I'll probably never work that hard again, thank God."

Larkin Street has always been committed to casting a wide net and broadening the agency's impact. This commitment enabled the organization to fill gaps in services and eliminate barriers to care. Its record attracted talented and dedicated staff members who in turn have continued to innovate. The mental health and substance abuse initiatives that Larkin Street implemented in 2001 and 2002 are examples.

Youth who experience histories of child abuse, the chronic stress of homelessness, trauma on the streets, and substance abuse require a high level of diverse services. Grants received in 2001 from the California Endowment and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services enabled Larkin Street to enhance its mental health and substance abuse services throughout all programs. Training was strengthened for all program staff; action teams provided representatives at each program site; and collaboration was increased with the City's Community Mental Health Services. Larkin Street then disseminated its innovative mental health assessment tools and best practices to other youth service agencies in California and beyond.

2000

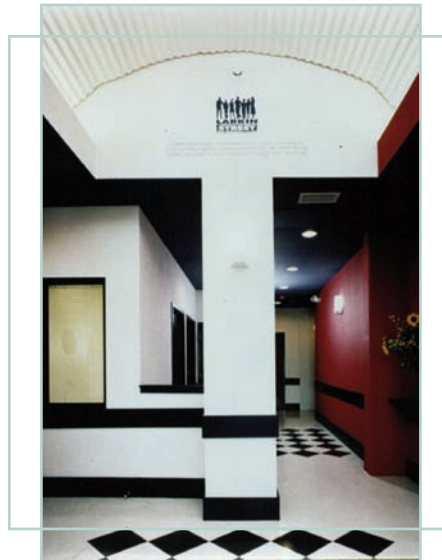


Lark-Inn for Youth, San Francisco's only shelter for 18–24 year olds, opens.

Diverse Funding Streams: From Balloons and Flyers to Gala Fundraisers

For the board, the biggest test since the mid-1990s has been financing Larkin Street's expansion. It was neither prudent nor possible to rely predominantly on government sources. The agency needed a balance of funding streams that included foundations, the business community, and individuals. Government funding generally paid for 60 to 65 percent of the agency's budget. As programs expanded, Larkin Street had to work harder and harder to raise the remaining funds needed from other sources. Jim Canales, Phil Estes, Paul Mohun, and their colleagues on the board brought in a stream of dynamic new members who had a deep commitment to Larkin Street's mission, served as its ambassadors, and helped build relationships in the community. From 1997 to 2003, the board's own giving grew at an annual rate of 36 percent.

One of these new board members was David Zenoff, a brilliant strategist and leader who would contribute immensely to Larkin Street's future success. One of his first ideas was a gala fundraiser, something the agency had never attempted. Event co-chairs Maria Muzio and Joanne Horning and a team of



Assisted Care/ After Care
Design by Sam Davis

“We Never Give Up On a Kid”

How has Larkin Street been able to help street kids turn their lives around in spite of seemingly intractable obstacles like heroin addiction, histories of severe abuse and neglect, and mental health issues? Larkin Street executive director Sherilyn Adams and former staff members Daniel Pitasky and Sam Cobbs offer some insights.

“Larkin Street plugs into the resilience of kids,” Pitasky says. “That begins with developing a relationship with the young person. Then the professional team figures out how to help the youth get from point A to point B, so that he or she can stay alive and ultimately attain success.” Some Larkin Street clients face tough, tough challenges. Sherilyn Adams explains, “The most important thing we do every day is to instill hope.”

It may take a year or more. Kids can move forward and then slip back. Some have been told all their lives they would never amount to anything. It is important to emphasize positives and to remind young people how far they have come. “Sometimes,” Pitasky adds, “that surprises both the kids and the staff.”

“Counselors have to have a thick skin,” Pitasky says. “Adolescence is a difficult time, regardless. Staff members sometimes need to plant seeds, be patient, and wait for kids to age out of behaviors.” Larkin Street’s secret, says Cobbs, is “We never give up on a kid.”

volunteers went to work, and in the spring of 2003, they put on the Paving the Way Gala, a spectacular event attended by over 400 guests. It was a success beyond even the most optimistic hopes and became a signature annual gala. Honey Johnson and Judy Getto co-chaired the event for three years running and led it to even greater heights. The six galas since 2003 raised over \$2,200,000 for Larkin Street.

Before Paving the Way, the agency had had mixed results with fundraisers and special events. In 1984, volunteers handed out balloons and flyers at the Polk Street Art Fair, raised awareness, and took in \$213 in donations. Jed Emerson credits board member Henry Safrit with working incredibly hard on fundraising events that helped keep the lights on in Larkin Street’s early years. In the 1990s, Williams-Sonoma hosted two holiday events for the agency at its flagship store, and an auxiliary group, Friends of Larkin Street, hosted comedy nights and other fundraisers. The comedy nights ended when a comedian’s routine was so offensive that Anne Stanton felt it necessary to call and write guests afterward to apologize.

A New Five-Year Plan: “We had to have smart growth and controlled growth.”

The board and staff worked hard through much of 2003 on a new five-year strategic plan to follow the 1996 plan. The 2003 plan included prioritized objectives for prudent expansion of current programs, such as continued development of housing-based services.

2001

Ellis Street Apartments are first youth-centered, affordable housing project in U.S.

It also called for formalizing Larkin Street's efforts to introduce its proven model to a broader audience through speaking, publishing, and training in agencies engaged in similar work, as well as in academic settings. Members of the Bridgespan Group, which assisted Larkin Street in the rigorous strategic planning process, offered it as a case study for sustaining success in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

The sharp economic downturn that had begun with the dot-com collapse in 2000 continued to cast a pall on funding, and the 2003 strategic plan included initiatives aimed at strengthening Larkin Street's financial base. Recalls board veteran Paul Mohun, "We wanted to continue to grow and serve more kids, but we felt that we had to have smart growth and controlled growth and to know that we had a way to pay for it before we jumped. I recall a lot of discussions about the fact that we were simply too big an agency to be living this hand to mouth. It was putting an increasing amount of pressure on the board and staff. We needed an operating reserve fund."

The year brought transitions as well. After nine years at Larkin Street, Anne Stanton resigned to take a senior position with the James Irvine Foundation, and Phil Estes completed his board term. Larkin Street was well positioned for these leadership changes. Paul Mohun succeeded Estes; and Estes agreed to lead a transition management team to guide the agency during the search for a new executive director. The team was equipped with a detailed transition plan.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health services are enhanced throughout all programs.

Expanded HIRE UP program relocates to Sutter Street.



2004 – 2008

The Miracle of Larkin Street: “A difficult job to do well, and nothing less will do.”

As 2004 approached, the transition management team and board were becoming increasingly concerned about the impact of the economy on Larkin Street’s financial position. The agency had ended its 2002–03 fiscal year with a \$460,000 operating loss and was unable to pay off its \$400,000 line of credit. Typically, November and December are the major fund-raising season for individual donations. While board members and the development staff, hoping for the best, worked on the annual fundraising appeal, the transition team drew up a contingency plan.

By January 2004, it was clear that cost-cutting and extraordinary fundraising efforts would be needed. The board reluctantly adopted a cost-containment plan to reduce expenses by \$295,000 in the last six months of the fiscal year. Although the plan ensured that no programs were eliminated, staff positions and salaries were affected. The board also boosted its goal for raising unrestricted funds from individual and corporate donors from \$1.7 million to \$2.2 million, a daunting increase of \$700,000 over the previous year. Two exceptionally generous board members, Patricia Dunn and Vince Hoenigman, offered to match all new donations up to \$100,000.

Phil Estes, leader of the transition team, recalls, “There were weeks when we were really close to not making payroll, and there were weeks when we had to ask the City to expedite

2002

The LOFT group home for 15–18 year olds opens.



payments to make sure we could meet our obligations. It was sweaty, but we did it”

The staff, board members, and donors performed spectacularly on the fundraising side. The agency also received an unexpected \$100,000 charitable bequest. By the end of the 2003–04 fiscal year, Larkin Street eliminated the previous year’s deficit, paid off the line of credit, and ended the year in the black. In the face of a weak economy, with no executive director and with a development director for only part of the year, everyone pulled together and turned a budget crisis into what one director described as “the miracle of Larkin Street.”

“The payback on this investment is huge.”

Meanwhile, the agency continued innovating. In 2004, building on an idea put forward by San Francisco Supervisor Bevan Dufty, Larkin Street opened a community-based housing program for youth aged 18 and older who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ). With the assistance of the Department of Human Services, Larkin Street acquired 12 rooms in a residential hotel in the Castro neighborhood. The **Castro Youth Housing Initiative** provides housing and links young people to supportive services—including comprehensive case management, health, mental health, substance abuse, HIV services, and educational and employment programs—through a collaboration with the Department of Public Health and Dimensions Clinic.

In 2004, Larkin Street celebrated its twentieth anniversary at the Paving the Way Gala. Featured speaker Mayor Gavin Newsom spoke eloquently of Larkin Street’s effectiveness in

“An International Model of Service.”

“Larkin Street Youth Services is a great program. People all around the globe recognize Larkin Street as an international model of service. That’s an extraordinary testament to two decades of contribution, two decades of commitment, two decades of constancy.”

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, 2004

bringing brighter futures to vulnerable young people and of its national and international leadership in its field.

In September 2004, Larkin Street welcomed a new executive director, Genny Price, and the transition team handed her an agency in excellent programmatic and financial shape. Price brought 27 years' experience working with homeless youth, most recently at Bridge Over Troubled Water in Boston. Working with consultants at Bain & Co., she helped lay the foundation for a reorganization of Larkin Street's management structure and improved internal operations.

The 2003 strategic plan included an ambitious goal of building an operating reserve equal to three months' operating expenses over the next five years. To date, the agency has built a reserve equivalent to approximately one month's operating expenses. This accomplishment was made possible by extraordinarily generous contributions of current and former board members Mary Lester and Patricia Dunn and their husbands. Lester, who had served on the board during earlier tough times, explains, "I think we did that purely because we knew what it was like not to have breathing space."

January 2005 brought Larkin Street's first Corporate Leadership Breakfast. Until then, according to Phil Estes, "We didn't have any connection to the corporate community in any organized way. I mean none." Guests from over 50 companies met to learn more about Larkin Street's efforts to get homeless kids off the streets. Howard Lester, chairman of Williams-Sonoma, Inc. and Mary's husband, was the keynote speaker. He spoke of their commitment to Larkin Street and Williams-Sonoma's experience with interns trained in

2003

Paul Mohun elected
board chair (2003–2004).



Drop-In Center and Medical Clinic
move to Sutter Street.

HIRE UP. Lester assured his audience of a high return on an investment in Larkin Street because of its efficiency in fulfilling its important mission. The event was hugely successful. Some attendees became significant supporters, and the Corporate Leadership Breakfast became part of Larkin Street's annual calendar.

A board and staff retreat in early 2005 led to new initiatives, which included strengthening the volunteer program and encouraging supporters to include Larkin Street in their estate plans. The Larkin Street Society was formed to recognize these supporters. In this instance, though, the agency's loyal donors were ahead of the leaders. In the eight years before the Society was launched, Larkin Street received over \$1.5 million in bequests. Donors saw a charitable bequest as a way they could ensure that Larkin Street's work would continue. Irv Lichtenwald, a Larkin Street Society charter member, no doubt spoke for others when he explained, "Larkin Street is investing in kids who have the willingness and capacity to learn and do something positive in their lives. The payback on this investment is huge."

David Zenoff succeeded Paul Mohun as board chair in 2005, and Sherilyn Adams was appointed executive director. Adams had proven herself as Larkin Street's director of specialty services, overseeing the agency's HIV services, as chief of programs, and as a member of the transition management team. She brought 20 years' experience in social service agencies addressing issues relating to children, families, homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health. Adams had no previous executive director experience, so she took

First Paving the Way Gala.



New five-year strategic plan adopted.

full advantage of Zenoff's expertise as an organizational development and leadership consultant; and Zenoff was more than generous with his time.

Soon after assuming her new role, Adams reported that Larkin Street's programs were operating at or near capacity at all times. In the preceding year, the agency had served a total of 2,028 youth, up from 1,487 the year before. More than 90 young people were in college. In October 2005, California First Lady Maria Shriver toured Larkin Street programs and held a press conference to speak of her admiration for the agency's frontline work.

In 2006, Larkin Street expanded the LEASE program that supports former foster youth who lack the skills and resources to make it on their own. Gerson Bakar & Associates contributed 20 reduced-rate apartments near San Francisco State University. City funding enabled Larkin Street to provide supportive case management and employment services to give youth the resources they need to reach their potential. Forty-five percent of Larkin Street clients were current or former foster youth. By 2008, LEASE provided 55 scattered-site, subsidized apartments to youth who have aged out of foster care.

Sharing Expertise and Best Practices

Increasingly since the 1990s, Larkin Street has hosted streams of professionals from across the United States and abroad and shared its successful model with others. After a site visit to the Assisted Care/After Care program, Doctors of the World (DOW) asked Larkin Street to provide training and technical assistance in St. Petersburg, Russia. HIV infection rates among street youth in Russia were 31 percent and higher. Substance abuse rates were also

2004

LEASE housing program for former foster youth begins.

Castro Youth Housing Initiative offers housing and services to LGBTQ youth.

high. During 2006 and 2007, Dina Wilderson, Lara Tannenbaum, Eliza Gibson, and Chandra Sivakumar conducted trainings in St. Petersburg in HIV prevention, case management, outreach, HIV test counseling, and drop-in center design for physicians, psychologists, and social workers. DOW staff also visited Larkin Street sites for training. As a result, programs modeled after Larkin Street are now serving street youth in St. Petersburg.

Policymakers also seek out the expertise of the agency's staff. In the 2006-2007 fiscal year, for example, Sherilyn Adams served on the California Advisory Board for Transitional Aged Youth and the Mayor's Transitional Youth Task Force. Staff members Ruth Nunez and Eliza Gibson were mayoral appointees to the Local Homeless Coordinating Board and the Methamphetamine Task Force, respectively. Staff members spoke at conferences throughout the country. In 2007, the Bechtel Foundation made a \$50,000 grant to the agency to support sharing its expertise and best practices with other service providers and policymakers across the United States and the development of tools to measure their impact. In the 2007-08 fiscal year, Larkin Street staff members gave 25 conference presentations in 10 states, 19 community presentations, and four trainings, and developed five publications.

Diversifying Support and Expanding Community Connections

The effort to diversify the agency's financial support took a giant leap forward in 2006 with the first Bay Area CFO of the Year Awards event. Board members Mary Prchal, Steve Kirmse, and Vicki Willock conceived and planned a business community awards dinner to honor chief financial officers who had played a critical role in the success of their organ-



Bay Area CFO of the Year Awards
Mary Prchal, Mary Huss, Steve Kirmse

Larkin Street
celebrates 20 years at
Paving the Way Gala.



David Zenoff
elected board chair
(2004-2007).



Genny Price becomes
executive director
(2004-2005).

Listening to Young People

Larkin Street understands the importance of providing young people with opportunities for giving input. The staff solicits feedback through client satisfaction surveys about every six months. All programs have suggestion boxes and hold community meetings, when clients can bring up ideas and concerns. Staff member Lara Tannenbaum, who has held several senior program positions, makes a point of interacting with kids at program sites. She has an open-door policy, "so kids can drop in and talk with me anytime they want."

To provide an additional mechanism for client input, Larkin Street started "Youth With Power," a youth advisory council, in 2006.

2005

First Corporate Leadership
Breakfast.

izations. A collaboration with the *San Francisco Business Times* and its publisher Mary Huss, the first CFO of the Year Awards event attracted over 400 attendees and netted over \$200,000. It was without question the most successful initiative ever to increase awareness of Larkin Street and build relationships in the business community. Corporate employees who learned about Larkin Street through the event organized company volunteer projects at agency program sites and served as mentors for young people. Within two years of the first awards event, several executives who had attended joined the board. Executive director Sherilyn Adams expects the ripple effect to continue for years.

CFO of the Year Awards events in 2007 and 2008 were also successful. In 2008, Larkin Street's two major annual fundraisers, Paving the Way and the CFO of the Year Awards, netted \$743,000 to help meet the needs of some of the city's most vulnerable youth.

David Zenoff completed his term as board chair in 2007. One of his gifts to the agency was to instill a sense that everyone connected with Larkin Street—current and former clients, staff, volunteers, supporters, and board—is part of a greater community. He has a strong sense of history; he encouraged former board members to re-engage with the agency through a new honorary board, invited the board to amend the bylaws to make former members, such as Phil Estes, eligible for re-election, and persuaded a member to undertake this history.

Steve Kirmse was elected Zenoff's successor as chair. Kirmse began his Larkin Street connection, as Phil Estes had, as an outreach volunteer, meeting young people on the street. "He really gets the struggles of young people," says Sherilyn Adams. "He completely,

Sherilyn Adams becomes
executive director
(2005–present).



wholly, and without judgment accepts who they are in their struggles." This shows every time Kirmse speaks about kids. Like Estes and Zenoff, Kirmse excelled in outreach to the business community, especially through the CFO of the Year Awards event. The relationships that he helped build in that community are a lasting legacy.

A New Day for the Arts Program

For the Larkin Street arts program, 2007 was an especially noteworthy year. With generous grants from the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the agency launched a significant expansion of the program. Peter Carpou, the program director, recruits professional artists—an actor, a dancer, a musician, and a performance artist, for example—to lead workshops and connect with youth over sustained periods. Carpou offers acting classes, open mike and comedy nights, a CD production workshop, and even a choir. For Carpou, a 20-year Larkin Street veteran, the biggest challenge is to develop relationships of trust with young people who have been abused or exploited by adults. He can then encourage them to come in for the services they need. "It's a very difficult job to do well," he says, "and nothing less will do."

51

Four Strategic Initiatives

By 2007 the agency was on track to accomplish most of the goals of the 2003 strategic plan, so the board and staff developed a plan for 2008 to 2012. Working with the Bridgespan Group and Bain & Co., the agency identified four strategic initiatives: expanding housing; improving the coordination of care; sharing knowledge and best practices with other service providers, thought leaders, and policymakers; and strengthening the agency's admin-

Larkin Street Society formed.

Larkin Street purchases the
Diamond Youth Shelter property.

istrative capacity, staff retention, and facilities to ensure that Larkin Street will have the organizational capacity to support current and new programs.

Expanding Transitional Housing Options to Support Independent Living

Between 2006 and 2008, Larkin Street opened three new transitional housing programs for young people aged 18 to 24: Routz, G-House, and Holloway House.

Many of the young people Larkin Street serves have significant mental health needs. Some also face other conditions that complicate their care, such as substance abuse, addiction or other health issues. To better meet their needs, Larkin Street created **Routz**. Working with a behavioral health team at San Francisco's Department of Public Health, Larkin Street identifies eligible young people and provides support services that include intensive case management, psychiatric care, education, and employment. Instead of institutional housing, Routz youth have their own apartments scattered across the city. Case managers assist clients with independent living skills, like handling a bank account and grocery shopping, and link youth to mental health providers. A licensed therapist from the Edgewood Center for Children and Families leads individual sessions, group sessions, and training for Larkin Street staff. Routz opened in 2006 with 18 apartments.

One Routz client, who had felt marginalized his whole life and now had a place to call home, related, "My case manager opened the door with the key card, and all of a sudden she opens the door and I was like 'Oh, my God! This is beautiful.' "

In 2002, Catholic Charities CYO asked Larkin Street to consider taking over Guerrero

2006

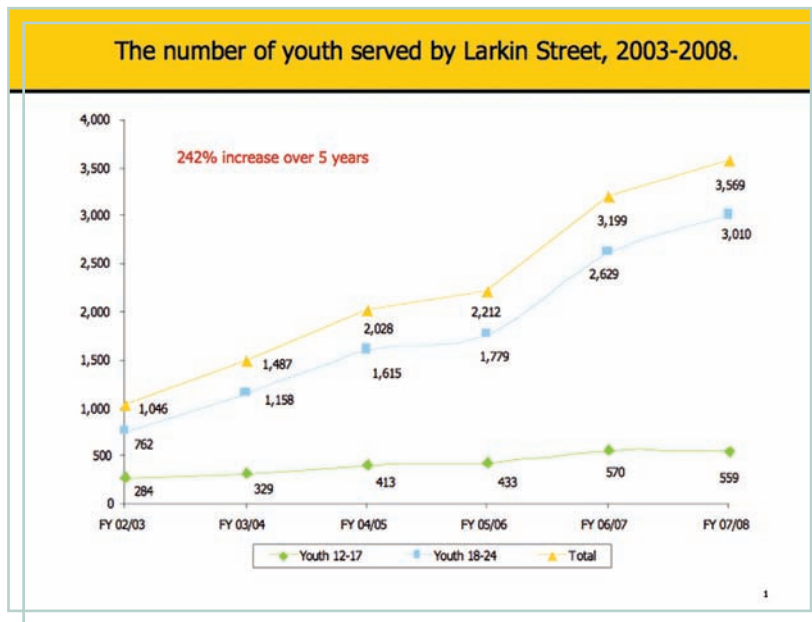
Staff members help develop HIV
prevention services for youth in
St. Petersburg.

House, a residential program for 18-to-24-year-olds. After close collaboration between the two agencies and other stakeholders, including Mercy Housing, the San Francisco Human Services Agency, HUD, and the Cahill Foundation, the program was relocated to a new 20-bed site on Geary Boulevard and reopened in late 2007 as **G-House**.

Volunteers have pitched in to remove grime, clear out debris, paint walls, assemble beds, hang curtains, and pull weeds. More remains to be done to make G-House a warm and welcoming home, but G-House manager Andrea Canaan says it is getting a little better every day, and "Next year it will be 20 times better."

G-House serves 20 youth ages 18 to 24 who face multiple barriers to exiting the street. Andrea Canaan is looking for young people with a high level of need and who are highly motivated and want to work. A significant number of G-House residents have physical disabilities. Some are immigrants who do not speak English, so G-House has bilingual staff on duty 24 hours a day. Residents also include LGBTQ youth who are struggling with gender identity. The program emphasizes intensive support and life-skills training that young people need for independent living.

Youth may stay at G-House for up to two years while they pursue their education and



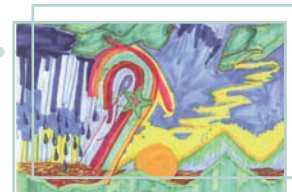
employment goals. Canaan acknowledges that G-House young people have pasts that are “pretty unimaginable,” but she and her staff build on their clients’ resilience and motivation. Canaan makes no secret of her high expectations: “The structure here is you’ve got to work. You’ve got to work. You’ve got to work.”

In a first for Larkin Street, Congregation Emanu-El, one of the oldest temples in the city, “adopted” G-House as a yearlong service project. Teams of volunteers are helping to create a home-like environment for G-House young people. A group of families joins residents in preparing, serving, and sharing Sunday dinner two to three times each month. Another team is building a library, where residents will have a quiet place to study. Volunteers painted, ordered furniture and bookshelves, and set up an online wish list for residents to enter books to be ordered. A third team is creating and equipping a workout room. When the room is ready, volunteers will train youth on the equipment.

Larkin Street added an additional transitional living facility, **Holloway House**, in 2008. Another nonprofit had closed a three-story, eight-bed facility for homeless young women in 2007. The building sat empty, and the Mayor’s Office of Housing approached Larkin Street about opening a housing program there. Believing that a reduction in the housing available for youth was unacceptable when need already outstripped supply, Larkin Street negotiated funding with the City, and within a short time the eight beds were full. Routz, G-House and Holloway House brought the total number of Larkin Street’s transitional housing beds to 193.

2007

New five-year strategic plan adopted.



Arts Program
is expanded.

A Capital Campaign to Rebuild Diamond Youth Shelter

Larkin Street reached a milestone in 2008 with the **Diamond Youth Shelter**, its emergency shelter for younger youth, 18 and under. Catholic Charities CYO had opened the Shelter in 1984, at the same time that the Larkin Street Youth Center opened. Together, these sites were essential hubs of support. Diamond has provided short-term, emergency housing 365 days per year. In 1993, Catholic Charities ceased operating Diamond, and Larkin Street took it over, though Catholic Charities continued to own the building.

Larkin Street longed to upgrade Diamond for years. In 2005, the agency at last was able to purchase the property with the assistance of a loan from the California Department of Housing and Community Development Emergency Housing Assistance Program. After careful study, the board decided to completely rebuild the 1905 structure to create an effective, home-like environment and to meet code and seismic requirements. The new building would double the existing square footage. Small bedrooms would replace two large dormitories; study alcoves and private counseling areas would be added; and a spacious kitchen and common areas would be created.

In 2007, Larkin Street launched an ambitious capital campaign to raise \$1.6 million in land purchase and construction costs to supplement approximately \$1.9 million in government funding for Diamond. Board member Vince Hoenigman and his wife, Amanda, primed the pump with an exceptionally generous contribution. Gifts of \$100, \$500, and \$1,000 sustain Larkin Street; and it would take scores of gifts of all sizes to make the capital campaign a success. To lead the campaign, the agency turned once again to Phil Estes. By early



Diamond Youth Shelter rendering



Stephen Kirmse elected board chair (2007–2008).

G-House opens to meet needs of transition-aged youth, 18–24.

"Delivering On the Promise"

In "Delivering on the Promise of Nonprofits," Jeffrey L. Bradach, Thomas J. Tierney and Nan Stone of the Bridgespan Group, offer Larkin Street as a case study in delivering results in the nonprofit sector:

"Since its founding in 1984, San Francisco-based Larkin Street Youth Services has become a model of innovative and effective service provision for homeless and runaway youths."

Harvard Business Review,
December 2008

2008 his committee was within \$175,000 of its goal. Supporters Phil Schlein and Marilyn Campbell then organized a superb "topping off" luncheon at Schlein's Napa Valley home. That day, Estes was able to announce that the goal had been reached. In thanking faithful supporters, Estes said that with the new shelter, "Kids will know they are valued from the very moment they open the door."

In November 2008, the old Diamond was demolished to make way for the new structure. To allow the agency to continue to provide emergency shelter to younger youth during the construction, space was made available on the first floor of G-House.

Meeting the Need in Hard Times

In mid-2008, Chris Brahm succeeded Steve Kirmse as Larkin Street's board chair. A partner in Bain & Co., a consulting firm that has supported Larkin Street for almost 20 years, Brahm's first exposure to the agency came as a member of corporate volunteer teams working on painting and cleaning projects. Later, he guided the agency through an organizational effectiveness study, a restructuring to improve services, and an initiative to improve employee job satisfaction. He also took a leading role in the 2007 strategic plan.

During 2008, U.S. economic conditions dramatically worsened. By the Fall, the country was in its worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. Stock market averages recorded their worst year since the 1930s; the economy was in recession; over 1,000,000 jobs were lost in the last two months of 2008 alone; and the consumer confidence index dropped to the lowest level ever recorded. At year-end, California faced a projected budget deficit over the next 18 months of \$42 billion.

2008

Chris Brahm elected
board chair (2008–present).



Holloway House opens, Larkin Street's third transitional living facility for 18 to 24 year olds.

In December 2008, because of California's acute financial challenges, a board that oversees state construction loans froze \$3.8 billion in funding for approximately 2,000 projects. The state's \$1,000,000 loan to support the rebuilding of the Diamond Youth Shelter was frozen. Two days later, Diamond campaign chair Phil Estes unquestionably spoke for many: "I have absolutely no doubt, knowing the resolve of this organization and the commitment of its stakeholders, that we will find a way to get this project built to serve these young people. We are simply not going to take 'no' for an answer."

In tough economic times, families are under increased stress. If previous patterns hold, the need for Larkin Street's services will increase significantly in its 25th anniversary year. While there will be financial pressures and a need to evaluate and refine, the Larkin Street of today is equipped to meet these challenges. Young people whose families fail them and who deserve a better chance in life will continue to be welcomed. They will find a supportive environment where they will be encouraged to see a future with possibilities and opportunities to grow and to flourish.

Making a Difference for 25 Years

For 25 years, Larkin Street has helped tens of thousands of San Francisco's most vulnerable youth move beyond the street and equip themselves for productive lives. The visionary leadership, passion, creativity, and dedication that made possible the founding of the Larkin Street Youth Center in 1984 are visible throughout Larkin Street's history. These qualities have enabled the agency to survive challenging times, to pioneer innovative services, to improve the community, and to make a life-changing difference for many thousands of young people. The need continues, and, without doubt, Larkin Street will help many thousands more youth in San Francisco and beyond to have better lives and achieve brighter futures.



Larkin Street volunteers.

Diamond Youth Shelter campaign
raises \$3.5M to rebuild shelter.

Appendices

Larkin Street at 25

Programs and Services

In 2009, Larkin Street's continuum of services includes 25 programs operating from 13 locations across San Francisco.

Point of Entry

- Street Outreach
- Drop-In Center
- Haight Street Referral Center

Housing

Emergency Housing

- Diamond Youth Shelter – serving youth ages 12-17
- Lark-Inn for Youth – serving youth ages 18-24

Transitional Housing

- LOFT – serving youth ages 15-18
- Avenues to Independence – serving youth ages 18-24
- G-House – serving youth ages 18-24
- Holloway House – serving youth ages 18-24
- Assisted Care – serving HIV positive youth ages 18-24
- After Care – serving HIV positive youth ages 18-24
- Castro Youth Housing Initiative – serving LGBTQ youth ages 18-24
- LEASE – serving former foster care youth ages 18-24
- Routz – serving youth ages 18-24 with significant mental health needs

Permanent Youth Housing

- Ellis Street Apartments – serving youth ages 18-24

Support Services

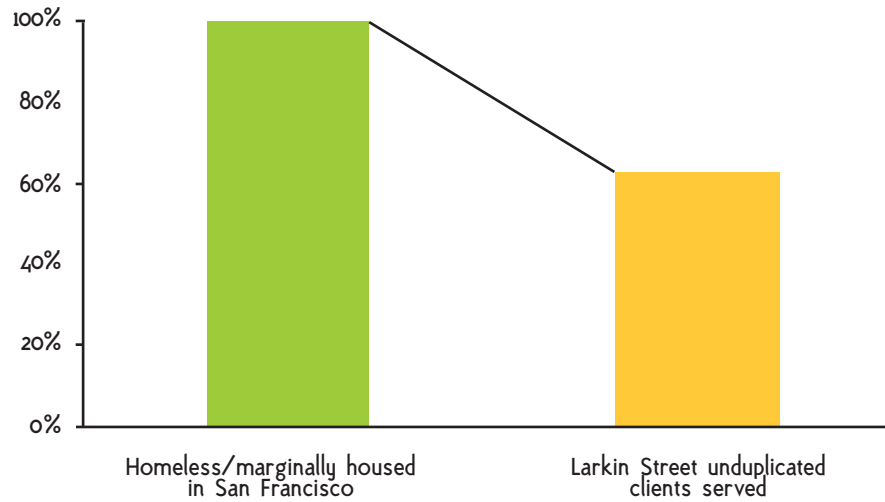
- Medical Clinic
- Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
- HIV Prevention
- HIRE UP - Employment Services
- HIRE UP - Education Services
- Day Labor Program
- On-site Accredited High School
- Intensive Case Management
- Arts Program

Larkin Street Metrics: a 2008 Snapshot

Beds for homeless youth ages 12-24:	274
Meals served in a year:	133,500
Volunteer hours contributed annually:	18,200
Counselors offering on-site support:	82
Counseling sessions and late night talks per year:	49,582
Number of Larkin Street employees:	153
Percentage of funds raised that directly support programs:	86%
Percentage of the youth who complete Larkin Street's comprehensive programs who exit street life:	74%

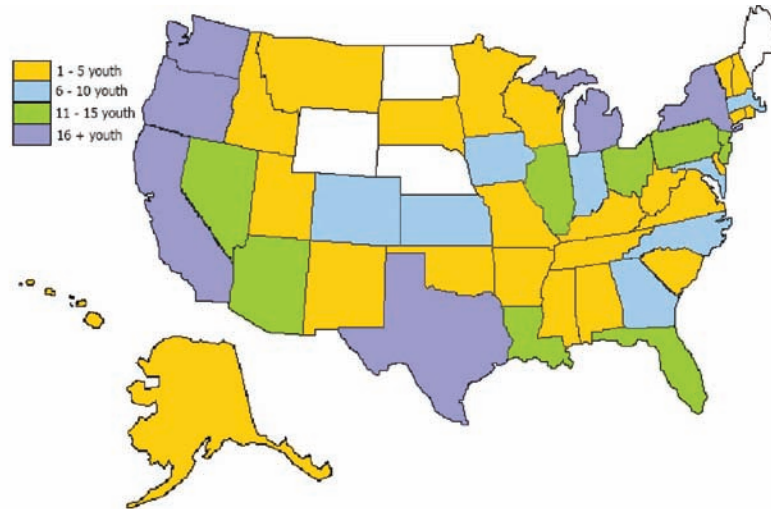
Youth Served

Between July 2007 and June 2008, Larkin Street provided services to over 3,500 youth, approximately 63% of San Francisco's homeless/marginally housed youth population.



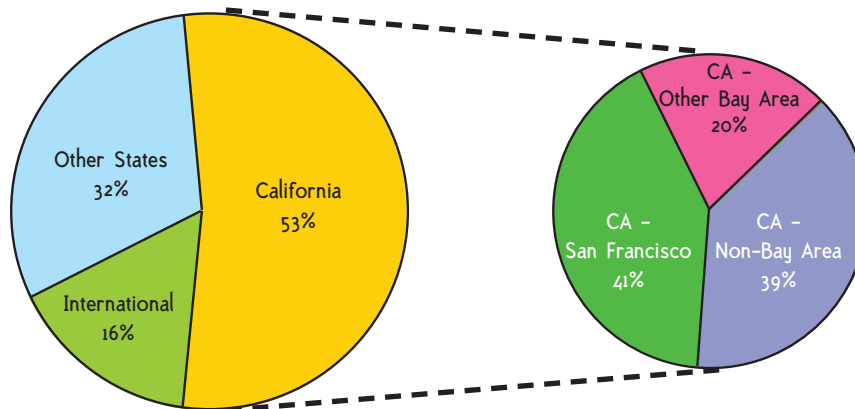
Demographics 2007-2008

Youth served by Larkin Street came from 50 states/territories and 42 foreign countries.

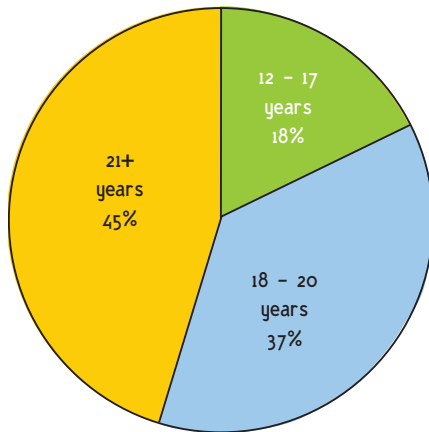


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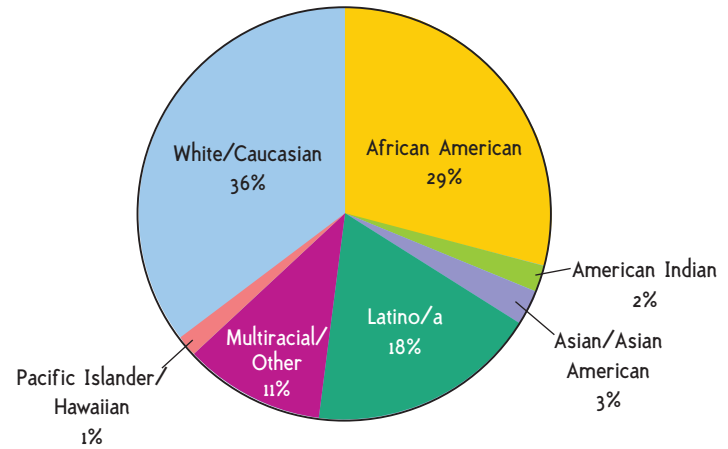
Place of Origin



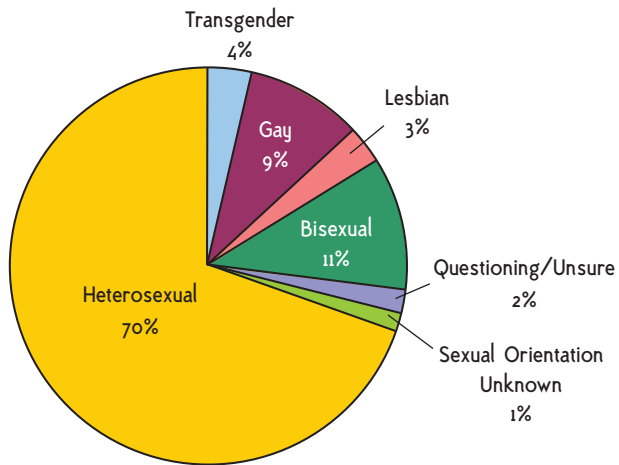
Age



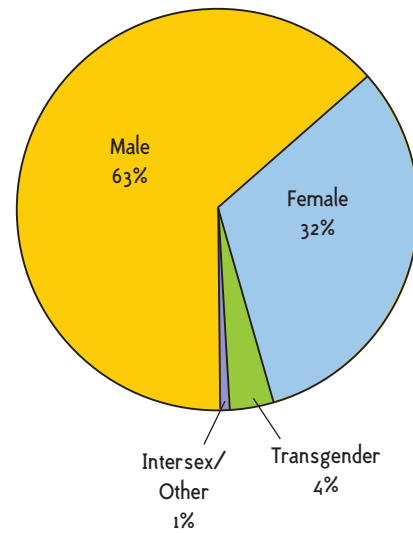
Ethnicity



Sexual Identity

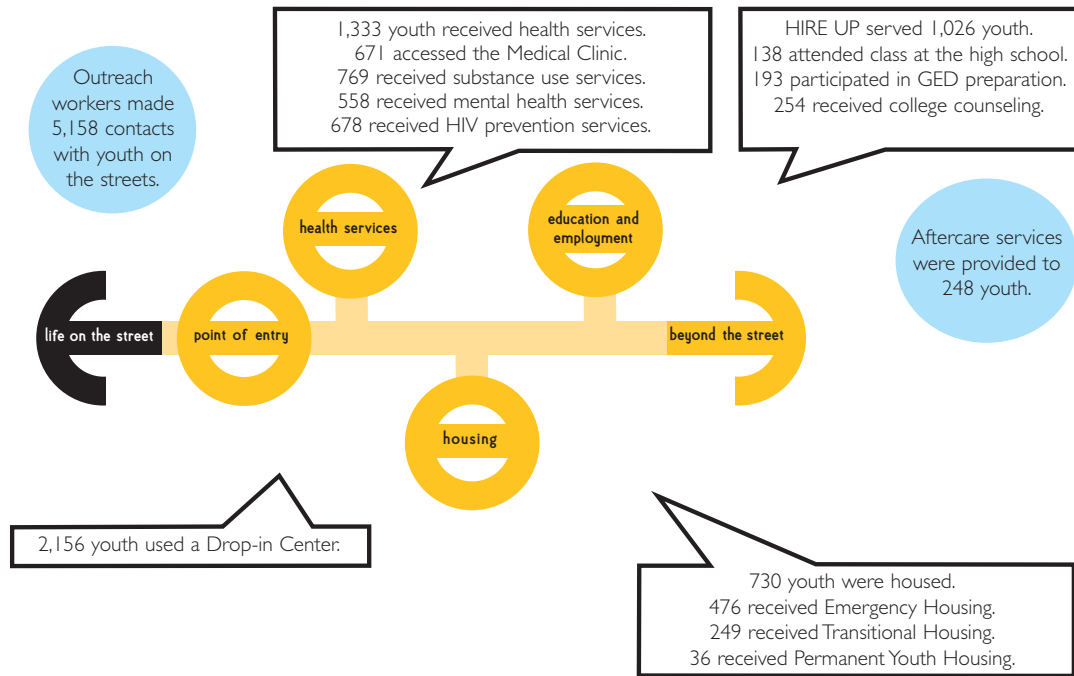


Gender



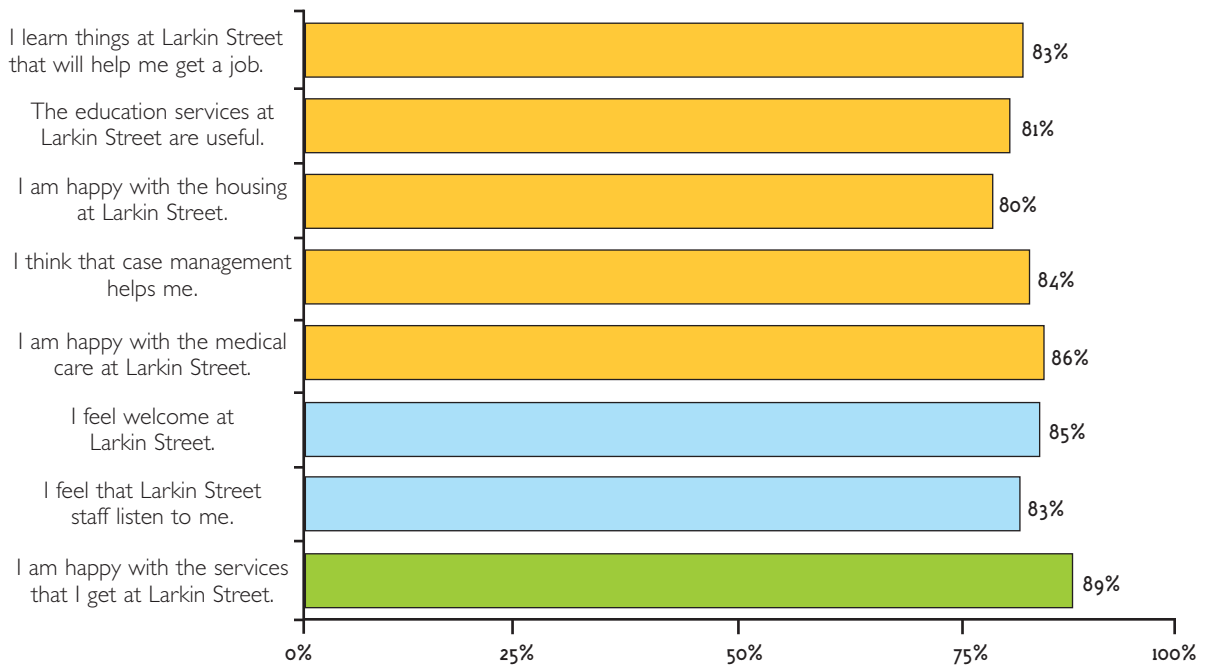
Larkin Street's Continuum of Services

Youth require a range of services to help them transition from the street. Larkin Street provided services to 3,569 homeless youth between July 2007 and June 2008.

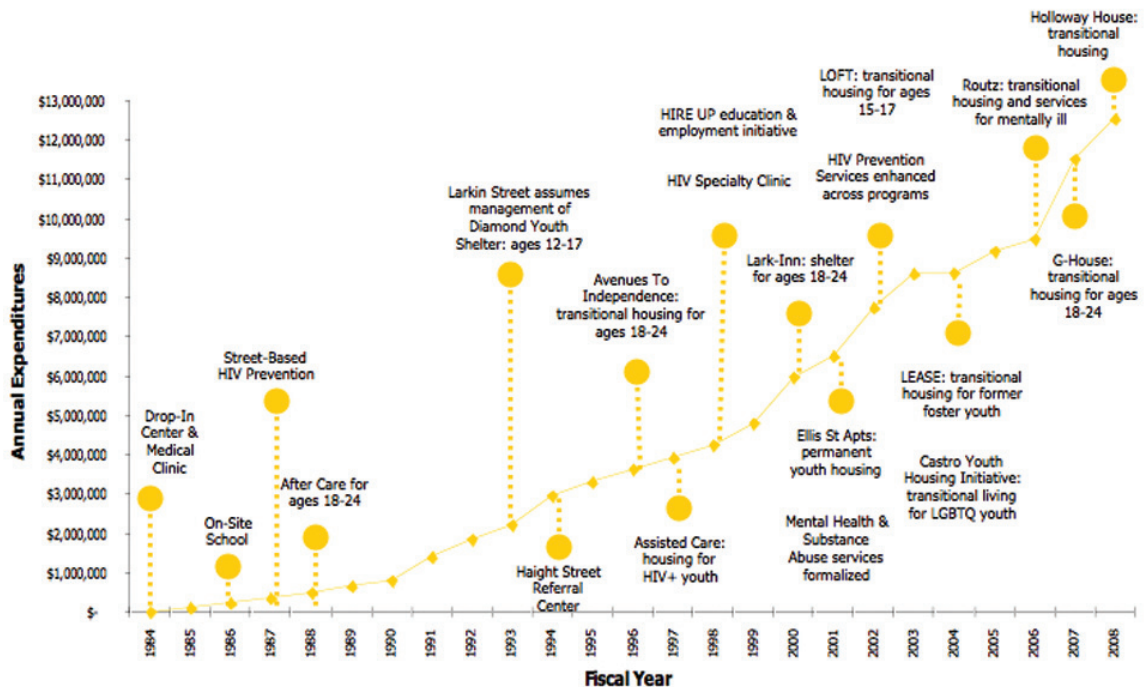


Youth Satisfaction

In 2008, youth reported high satisfaction with Larkin Street's services, the environment, and the agency as a whole. Many have found stability and support at Larkin Street that had been absent in their lives.



Larkin Street's growth, 1984-2008



Awards Received by Larkin Street

Lewis Hine Award for Outstanding Service to Youth, Sherilyn Adams, 2008

San Francisco 49ers' Perry/Yonamine Unity Award, 2007

San Francisco Mental Health Board's Exceptional Programs and People Award, 2007

National Foster Care Parents' National Foster Care Month: Change a Lifetime Award, 2006

National Network for Youth's Agency of the Year, 2004

J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation's Award for Excellence in Workforce Development, 2003

Johnson & Johnson's Crystal Award for Community Healthcare, 2002

Association for Corporate Growth's Emerging Non-Profit of the Year, 2002

National Youth Employment Coalition's PEPNet Award, 2002

Precita Eyes Mural Award, 2002

The Enterprise Foundation and Met Life Foundation Award for Excellence in Supportive Housing, 2002

The Management Center and Wells Fargo Bank's Trailblazers Award, 2000

Chevron and the Management Center's Award for Excellence, 1994

San Francisco Foundation's John R. May Award for Creative Leadership, 1992

Woman of the Year Award (Roxane White), 1992

San Francisco Junior Chamber of Commerce, Ten Outstanding Young San Franciscans (Diane Flannery), 1991

President George H.W. Bush, 1,000 Points of Light Award, 1990

Larkin Street People in this Book

Larkin Street Board Members

Board Chairs

Jon Herzstam	1983 – 1984
Rev. Jean Richardson	1984 – 1988
Pat Norman	1988 – 1988
Penelope Douglas	1988 – 1993
Mary V. Lester	1994 – 1997
James E. Canales	1997 – 1999
Philip S. Estes	1999 – 2003
Paul Mohun	2003 – 2004
David A. Zenoff	2004 – 2007
Stephen C. Kirmse	2007 – 2008
Chris Brahm	2008 – present

Other Former and Current Members of the Board of Directors

Richard Baker-Lehne
Ray Brown
Larry Colton
Jay Cuetara
Patricia Dunn
Judy Getto
Vince Hoenigman
Irene Holmes
Honey Johnson
John Kalin
Leonard Kingsley
Stephen Koch
Zach Long
John Martin
Maria Muzio
Chuck Olson
Mary Prchal
Henry Safrit
Carsten Sorensen
Vicki Willock



Irene Holmes, Bill Campbell, Henry Safrit,
Richard Baker-Lehne, 2007.

Larkin Street Employees

Executive Directors

Rev. Kathleen Jimenez	1985 – 1985
Jed Emerson	1985 – 1989
Diane Flannery	1989 – 1993
Roxane White	1993 – 1994
Anne Stanton	1994 – 2003
Genny Price	2004 – 2005
Sherilyn Adams	2005 – present

Other Former and Current Employees

Cheryl Barth, Chief Operating Officer
Andrea Canaan, Program Manager
Peter Carpou, Arts Program Director
Sam Cobbs, Director
Greg Day, Community Relations Coordinator
Kriss Deiglmeier, Director of Operations
Judy Diamond, Administrative Assistant
Ken Dunnigan, M.D, Medical Director
Eliza Gibson, Chief Program Officer
Mike Kennedy, Director
Ruth Nunez, Director
Daniel Pitasky, Program Manager
Chandra Sivakumar, Program Manager
Aron Sumii, Director
Lara Tannenbaum, Director
Denise Wells, Chief Operating Officer
Dina Wilderson, Chief of Research and Evaluation

Larkin Street Volunteers and Friends

Marilyn Campbell

Scott Campbell

Jose Castro

Sam Davis, Sam Davis Architecture

Bevan Dufty, Member, San Francisco Board of Supervisors

Dianne Feinstein, former Mayor of San Francisco

Roy Francies

Gerry Hill

Amanda Hoenigman

Joanne Horning

Dr. Roger Hull, Pastor, Old First Presbyterian Church

Mary Huss, Publisher, *San Francisco Business Times*

Maryalice Kelley

Howard Lester

Irv Lichtenwald

Martha Stoner Losch, Chair, Old First Polk Street Outreach Committee

Gavin Newsom, Mayor of San Francisco

Phil Schlein

Maria Shriver, First Lady of California

Stephen Taber

Russell Zellers

A Tribute to Bill Campbell

Bill Campbell is the only person who could have written this insightful and comprehensive history of Larkin Street Youth Services. His commitment to the plight of homeless and runaway youth and his compelling strength and determination have been instrumental in guiding us successfully through our first 25 years.

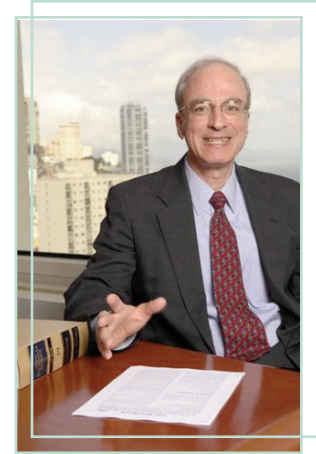
Bill was a founding member of Larkin Street Youth Services: one of the first to lead the charge among the congregants at Old First Church. He encouraged them to open their hearts and their helping hands to the homeless youth who were sleeping on the streets outside of the church doors. Once Larkin Street was formally launched, Bill's attention and devotion never waned. For his most recent nine years as a board member, he was an inspiration to his fellow trustees, so often providing the much-needed connectivity to the founding principles and values of the organization; something that, to this day, he continues to do.

In recent years, through his vision and leadership, Bill led the effort to establish the Larkin Street Society, the planned giving program that has helped to establish an important framework for our future. And of course, the many, many hours that Bill devoted to writing Larkin Street's history are yet another testament to his commitment not only to the agency, but more importantly to the youth we serve. In all of his years with the agency, Bill has never lost sight of the youth. His compassion is indeed inspiring.

We are truly thankful for Bill's friendship, involvement and leadership over these past 25 years. We know that if Bill is on our team as we move forward, we can only get stronger.

A Note from Bill Campbell

What I love about Larkin Street is its capacity for changing the lives of young people. I met Brynn when she happened to be seated next to me at the first Paving the Way dinner. She had come to Larkin Street in 1996 as a 15-year-old speed addict who did not know where her next meal was coming from. She was selling drugs on the street to survive. Larkin Street helped her; she told me recently, "because you had the right people. The heart was there." Larkin Street offered "someone showing you that they love you just as you are," she said. "That's what works for Larkin Street." When I met Brynn at that dinner in 2003, she had received a degree from UCLA and she was working with autistic children. Brynn is just one of the thousands of people who are living self-sufficient and productive lives because Larkin Street helped them.



This history of Larkin Street's first 25 years draws on my personal experience, shared recollections, and archival materials, such as annual reports, internal documents, and periodicals. Except for the files that I kept from 1981 to 1986, Larkin Street's written record before 1998 is limited.

In 1981, I was a member of Old First Presbyterian Church when our pastor, Roger Hull, told me about the question that a visitor to San Francisco asked, "What is your church doing to help these kids on the street?" I felt, as did others in our church, that our congregation had to see if we could help. As a member of the church's governing board and of the Polk Street Outreach Committee that we formed, I advocated for trying to help these young people and for calling together a broad community effort to increase our effectiveness.

The Polk Street Outreach Committee, led brilliantly by Martha Stoner Losch, hosted the first Polk Street Town Hall meeting at Old First on November 7, 1981. I recall being impressed by the breadth of expertise and potential resources and the energy in the room that day. I served on the steering committee that we formed and on the founding board of directors when we incorporated.

The steering committee and the early board encouraged wide community participation. I asked Stephen Taber, a member of Old First, to help draft Larkin Street's bylaws. Steve wrote the first draft, and I tailored it a bit.

Many boards do not pay much attention to bylaw provisions; this board formed a committee that studied the draft line by line and questioned me to ensure that our bylaws provided for maximum corporate democracy. It would have been easy for this grassroots effort to have unraveled. Jean Richardson deserves enormous credit for holding us together.

In our early days, I wrote letters to Mayor Dianne Feinstein urging her to support funding for Larkin Street; helped hire our first two employees, Greg Day and Judy Diamond; and represented Larkin Street in long and largely unsuccessful negotiations with our consortium partner Youth Advocates. I felt the energy and passion that Jed Emerson brought to us in 1985 and participated in our response to the May 1986 fire in the Drop-In Center.

From 1986 through 1997, I did not participate in Larkin Street's leadership; but my wife, Marilyn, and I remained supporters. We followed its progress and, with our son, Scott, we volunteered on Thanksgiving and Christmas. In early 1998, we attended an event for donors at board member Leonard Kingsley's home. I met Stephen Koch, a board member, and he told me about the Larkin Street of 1998, which by this time was a more mature organization. That evening, Len Kingsley asked guests to consider joining the board. I took this as an invitation and sent a note to Jim Canales, who chaired the board, to volunteer:

My second board stint began in 1998 and continued to 2007. In those nine years, Larkin Street accelerated its progress and increased its ability to make a life-changing impact in the lives of young people. Looking back on these years, if I made a lasting contribution, it was leading our effort to start a planned giving program and encouraging our supporters to create an enduring legacy by including Larkin Street in their estate plans.

Since the early 1980s, I have seen one remarkable group after another build upon the work of all who preceded them, rise to challenges, and create the amazing organization that Larkin Street has become at this anniversary. It is a privilege to share part of that story with you, and I hope that you will visit Larkin Street's Web site at www.larkinstreetyouth.org and share your part of the story.

Bill Campbell

Larkin Street Youth Services' mission is to create a continuum of services that inspires youth to move beyond the streets. We will nurture potential, promote dignity, and support bold steps by all.

Visit Larkin Street's Web site at
www.larkinstreetyouth.org
and share your part of the Larkin Street story.