



ANNUAL REPORT

2023

EDITION



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Winter, 2023

Providing a Safe Place to Land; Changing Lives

I first came to TLC Child and Family Services in 2003 as a social worker and worked my way into the position of regional director. After five years of embracing the culture and care that every foster and adoptive family received, I was eager to deepen my understanding of mental health and how to serve those in need. This led me to take a role with Eli Lilly Pharmaceutical Company in the neuroscience division. Here I spent years gaining a rich understanding of the neurobiology behind crucial mental health diagnoses such as schizophrenia, bipolar, depression, anxiety, and ADHD. The work felt meaningful, and my role developed into an ambassadorship throughout the United States working to increase corporate giving to organizations on the ground doing such important work for their communities.

It took a scary emergency landing of an airplane for me to realize I could do life-changing work without leaving Sonoma County. When I rejoined TLC in 2014, it felt like coming home and it was a natural process to advance to CEO. Each day I'm reminded of that uncertain airplane ride as we give the most vulnerable in our community a safe place to land, the opportunity to regain their footing, and the chance to achieve a new perspective on life.

Your gift today will give young people the opportunity for a better life.

Here is a snapshot of our work:

There's a toddler who has never met her father and has rarely seen her mother smile. In fact, her mom isn't even around to smile much. The toddler doesn't realize that her mom is holding down two jobs just to try to make ends meet. She only knows she misses her mom and rarely has enough to eat. She has no idea most kids her age eat three meals a day and have snacks; in fact, she couldn't really even describe a meal or a snack. She just knows she's hungry—literally and figuratively. She's hungry for food, love, and stability.

TLC's Foster Family Services is the lifeline for children like this.

There's a teenager filled with apprehension at the thought of entering a classroom. He may be failing English class, but knows all too well what "bullying" means. He's taken to simply not going to school. His parents have tried everything and are at a loss. Not attending class and feeling he's disappointing his parents, he's spending more and more time alone in his room. He's failing school, and certain he's failing life, too. **TLC's Journey Academy is a game-changer for teenagers like this.**

There are many young adults with nowhere to go. No family—at least none that are safe. They know they're supposed to be entering college or gainfully employed, but at the moment, finding a decent meal, a daily shower, and a place to sleep seem like insurmountable hurdles. Despite their many strengths and dreams for their futures, these young people approach each day with anxiety and the weight of the world on their shoulders. **TLC's Transitional Housing is life-changing for these young people.**

In the enclosed annual report, you'll read about programs like these and some of the lives we've changed. This work only happens because of supporters like you.

I had the bumpiest of rides on an airplane, but it was just that—an airplane ride. My momentary brush with complete uncertainty and panic was quickly replaced by relief as emergency vehicles waited and we landed safely. For the young people we serve, the instability, fear, and sometimes downright terror is not an airplane ride. It's daily life. **TLC Child and Family Services is there for them. We are the emergency vehicle for these children and youth, helping them move away from their bumpy rides with life towards stability and security.**

As we close out 2023 and embrace a new year, please help children embrace a new life with a gift to TLC.

With deep gratitude,



Susan Fette, MFT
CEO



PS Your generous gift today goes directly toward improving a child's life. Thank you for your involvement and life-changing support.

**Donate
Today**



WHO WE ARE

Since 1975, TLC Child and Family Services has been serving the most vulnerable communities. Today, we are a recognized leader at the forefront of innovation in family services. We lead the charge in serving foster and at-risk youth, positively changing the trajectory of individual lives. In the process, we help make Sonoma County the most vibrant and thriving community possible.

Mission

Providing healthy, healing environments and experiences for foster and other youth and their families, in which their differences are leveraged, valued, and celebrated.

Values

Excellence, Integrity, Transparency, Collaboration, and Equity

Philosophy

TLC, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, serves Sonoma County's most vulnerable children, youth, and families.

Our comprehensive programming serving ages 0-25 includes foster care, adoption and post-adoption services, residential treatment, behavioral health, special education, and transition-age youth housing services for young adults. In addition, TLC has been entrusted by the Sonoma County Children's Village Legacy Fund to provide funds for orthodontic and dental care to foster youth who would otherwise not have access to these critical services. We are specialists in gender-affirming care and recognize the unique and diverse needs of the LGBTQ+ community. Across our programs, we provide culturally and linguistically responsive services to BIPOC youth and families.

TLC is committed to a process of collective and self-reflection to address implicit bias and systemic racism to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for all our staff and the individuals we serve. We strive to eradicate prejudice and develop a greater appreciation and awareness of the intersectional identities of our diverse staff and clients. In our work, we engage in a practice of cultural humility to promote social justice, recognizing individuals and communities as experts on their own culture and experience. Our programs and practices endeavor to create an environment in which all differences by race, ethnicity, culture, religion, socioeconomic status, origin, age, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression are respected, supported, and valued as crucial to TLC's success in serving our community.



Our Impact

Through our various programs, TLC annually serves over 250 children, young adults, and families per day in Northern California.

Transition Age Youth Housing Programs

Imagine being 18 years old with nowhere to go. No family—at least none that are safe. You know you're supposed to be entering college or getting a job, but at the moment, finding a decent meal, a daily shower, and a place to sleep seem like insurmountable hurdles.

Enter TLC Child & Family Services.

Our Transition Age Youth Housing Programs support current and former foster youth and homeless youth with both emergency and transitional housing. With us, youth learn critical life skills for independence such as financial literacy, job readiness, and effective parenting. Participants can access food from our food pantry, engage in one-on-one therapy, job counseling, and much more. As community experts working with youth in unstable situations, we provide participants with a strong foundation and the support necessary to learn, grow, and develop important life skills for leading successful, independent adult lives.

In 2023, TLC's Transition Age Youth Housing Programs assisted an average of 61 youth ages 16-25 each month, with 97% exiting with safe, stable, and affordable housing.



"THP gave me the tools and support to learn the independent living skills I would otherwise have lost. Coming from a dysfunctional and separated family, THP placed me with a family who took me in, cared for me, and role-modeled a healthy lifestyle. Then THP placed me with roommates where I created life-long bonds. Lastly, they placed me in a studio where I learned the value of independence and responsibility. All the while letting me make the necessary mistakes to grow into an adult and learn who I was. I will always be grateful for THP and their amazing staff."

-TLC Transition Age Youth Housing Program Alum

Our Impact

Journey Academy

Not every student can thrive in a traditional high school setting. Some are filled with apprehension at the thought of entering a classroom. Some are victims of extreme bullying. Others are overwhelmed by large classes or have learning challenges. These students find themselves on the verge of failing, or they may have simply stopped showing up to school altogether.

Students such as these find their home with us. Journey Academy, a non-public high school and residential treatment program, is dedicated to providing education, case management, small class sizes, trauma-informed services, and greater individual attention to youth experiencing emotional and academic challenges, such as anxiety, depression, suicidality, autism, and ADHD.

With hands-on, engaging activities and small classroom sizes, TLC is an expert at meeting youth where they are at.

This past year at Journey Academy, 83% of students earned more credits than they had in their previous high school placement.

They did so with an 85% school attendance rate—a remarkable statistic, given the chronic absenteeism most struggled with before coming to Journey Academy. One such student hadn't attended school in over a year. Here's what she had to say about her experience in TLC's Culinary Arts program within Journey Academy:

"Culinary arts has taught me that I can feel connected, comfortable, and cared for in a welcoming cooking environment. Culinary arts has changed my life in that I now know who and what I want to be in my future, I have more aspirations, goals, and motivators. My favorite part of culinary is helping others and feeling a sense of community in something that I enjoy."





Our Impact

Foster Family and Adoption

In Sonoma County alone, there are 50+ children *each day* who need homes, sometimes for a few days and sometimes forever. Most just need a temporary haven while their parents get help coping with the issues that created an unstable home. However, some may need a new forever family.

TLC's Foster and Adoption programs help individuals and families to become resource (foster) parents, ensuring children from infancy through early adulthood find nurturing, healing homes for as long as they need.

Within our Foster Family and Adoption programs, 58% of youth identify as part of the BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ community. This high percentage reflects both the disproportionate number of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth within the system, as well as TLC's expertise and reputation for meeting the diverse and unique needs of these populations with gender-affirming care and culturally responsive services.

For youth who have been bounced around from home to home, not accepted for who they are, TLC's foster families provide the safety and acceptance they need to thrive.

"It's really important to understand how brutally some of these kids have been treated when they started to try to express themselves when they were younger, and how much that stays in a kid's emotional response and in a kid's fear in being able to express themselves.

Don't underestimate how powerful it is to simply like a kid. Kids who feel like you like them will feel more like they can like themselves. For our kids, they really thrived. They are doing really well. You can't argue with their success. A kid who is really struggling can start to really smile and do better."

-TLC Foster Parent



Our Impact

Behavioral Health Services

TLC provides trauma-informed, evidence-based therapeutic services. We have a team of engaged, highly skilled clinicians who provide comprehensive family, group, and individual therapy, as well as case management and behavioral support. At TLC, we see each client as a whole person with many undiscovered talents and untapped capacities. We see each family as a unique system with many resources for connection and healing. We listen for strengths and build upon them.

Youth who have engaged with our services reported:

Nearly 100% report healthier relationships, better communication, improved coping skills, and more success in school and job readiness. This includes feeling more socially competent and confident with a deeper sense of identity, purpose, and meaning in their life. In addition, 100% report a reduction in self-harmful behaviors.



One of our families wrote to their TLC clinician:

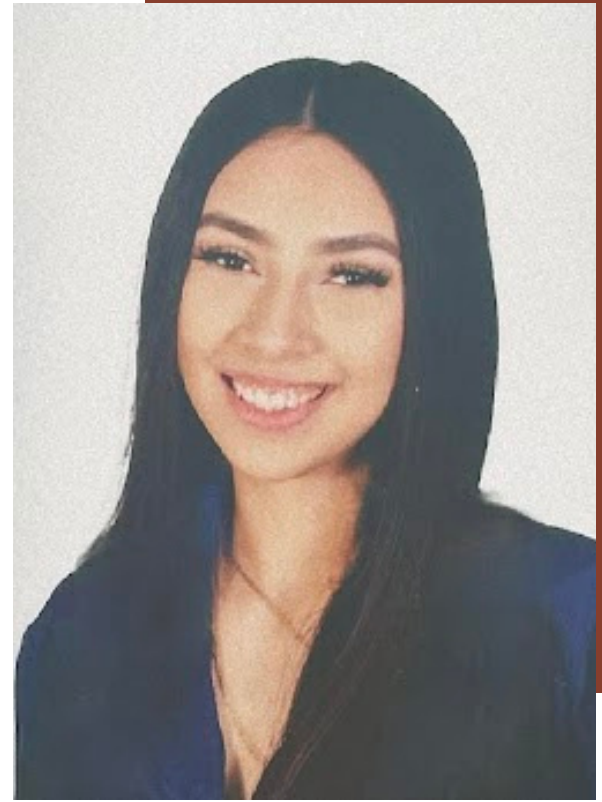
"Thank you for working with our child and family. We value your support. Additionally, I marvel at your work ethic. I especially appreciate Your advocacy and support for our child. You've been an important part of what's made Journey Academy a great experience. Your willingness to stretch us in areas that we're uncomfortable with. You've had a positive impact on our relationship with our child."

Wendy Suarez

A Story of Success and Triumph

"When I arrived at TLC, I was in a very difficult stage of my life. I was dealing with an absent parent, major depression, and suicidal ideation. I'm 19 today and have now been off medication for 2 years. I'm not going to say that every day is unicorns and rainbows. The difference between then and now is that I know what my purpose is.

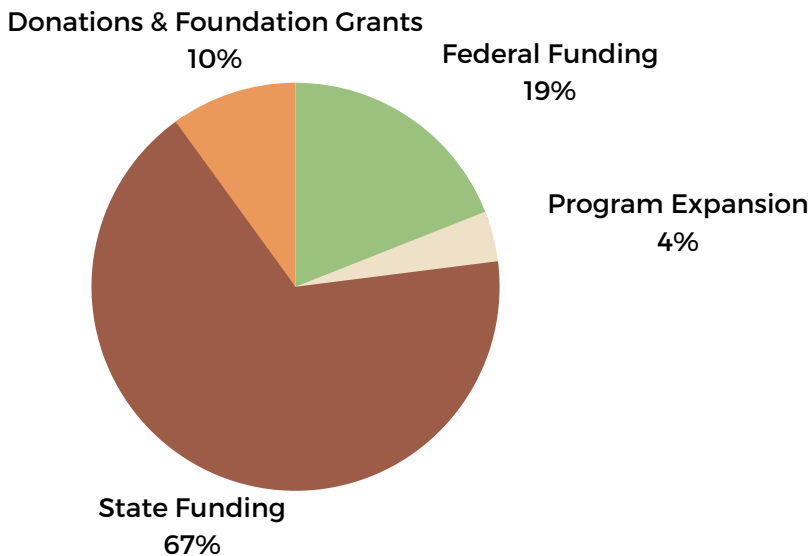
I am currently a certified clinical medical assistant and aspire to be a neonatal nurse or microbiologist. Journey Academy taught me how to mature and value my life. They showed me the skills to be successful in my adulthood. I can confidently say TLC helped me become the person I am today."



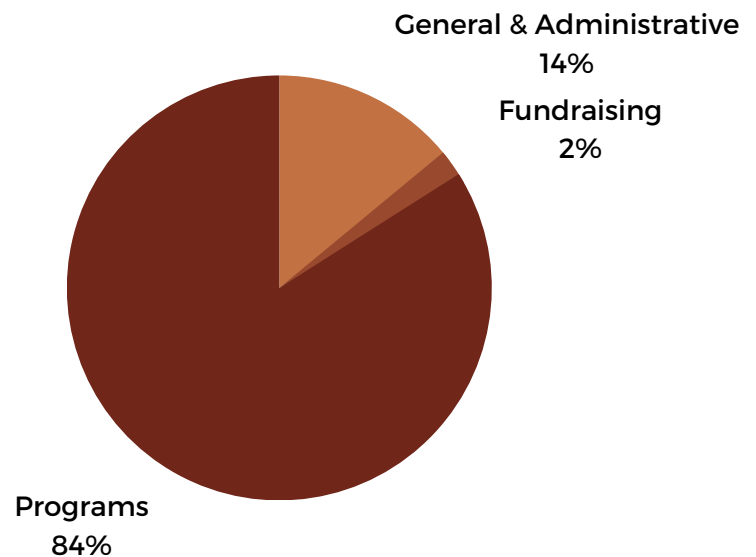
Wendy Suarez, TLC's Journey Academy Alum

FINANCIALS

Income Percentages



Expense Percentages



Innovation and Advocacy

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI)

We provide a safe environment where everyone is respected and valued. We strive to ensure that our culture does not perpetuate oppressive practices. TLC denounces racial injustice and discrimination.

LGBTQ+

TLC has been accredited by the Human Rights Campaign and recognized for providing a culture of safety, support, belonging, confidence, visibility, and a voice for the LGBTQ+ community, both within our agency and the larger community.



Project Flare

TLC's Project Flare is on a mission to undo aloneness and create a legacy of visibility for LGBTQ+ youth. We recognize that being a youth today is difficult enough without the added feeling of not belonging, being an outsider and different, or outright ostracized from peers. Through workshops, community building, and storytelling, Project Flare strives to empower and uplift the LGBTQ+ community. After attending Project Flare, 100% of participants reported feeling good about themselves, and over 75% reported feeling less alone in their lives and looking forward to their future.

"Project Flare was extremely important for me. It was the first time I had ever been with an entire group of people that I could feel comfortable with and relate to what I was also going through. I made acquaintances with so many brilliant minds there. Because of the event and the support of everyone who works at TLC, I feel hopeful that someday I can speak out about my identity and how it affects my life without feeling guilty about it."

-2023 Project Flare Participant

North Bay Business Journal Best Places to Work Award

TLC was recognized as one of the North Bay Business Journal's Best Places to Work 2023. Here's what a TLC staff member had to say about their work:

"TLC strives to be inclusive of both its employees and the community it serves. It constantly works to self-reflect on its efforts towards this goal and is open and receptive to change to meet this goal more effectively."

North Bay Business Journal Diversity in Business Leadership Award

After an extensive review process, The North Bay Business Journal selected TLC to receive the 2023 Diversity in Business Award. The judging panel found TLC to be among the most outstanding companies championing diversity within the North Bay, noting that companies like TLC demonstrate an exemplary commitment to creating a diverse workplace culture. Additionally, Board Member Carson Amiral won in the Individual category for Diversity in Leadership.



SUCCESS STORIES

Paul

Paul was a former gang member, who despite years of therapy, was unresponsive to it. He was caught in a cycle of addiction, which ultimately resulted in incarceration. When Paul came to TLC, he found staff who truly believed in him and supported him with words and actions. This encouraging environment enabled Paul to turn his life around. Paul is now sober, works as a construction foreman for a highly respected company, and works inside Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, sponsoring men twice his age. In addition, Paul is a motivational speaker at the California Youth Authority, where he inspires young men to achieve their full potential.

Trinity

When Trinity arrived at TLC, she was so shy and reluctant to look at others that she completely hid behind her hair. We knew that she wrestled with severe depression and anxiety and that, as a result, she was rarely attending school. At TLC's Journey Academy, she began a therapeutic program to process the complex trauma she had endured. During art classes, Trinity blossomed. As she built trusting relationships, she figuratively and literally showed more of herself. Trinity pulled her hair back—she had beautiful eyes! Feeling safer and more secure, Trinity graduated high school. Following graduation, Trinity was unable to return home. Her perpetrator was still there. TLC sponsored Trinity and launched her into independent living. Today, Trinity is both a college student and working artist who has received invitations to New York art shows and local galleries and has been invited to paint murals for the community.

Dominic

Dominic was an adopted youth who loved his parents deeply, yet struggled with depression and anxiety stemming from severe bullying at school and events of his past. Despite now being in a stable family, Dominic struggled to make progress and was not attending school. At home, he found himself so depressed he couldn't move from his couch. With the weight of depression on his shoulders, Dominic had no motivation. He was 16 years old, smart, and capable, but despite his efforts and parents who tried everything they could to help him, he couldn't get out from under his depression and anxiety. Most days, as a form of escapism, Dominic ended up simply playing video games all day. He came to TLC overwhelmed by his mental health challenges. Once enrolled in Journey Academy, Dominic's mental health improved and he began to thrive. Perhaps for the first time in his life, he learned he was funny! He became popular among the students and a favorite among the staff. As he worked through his anxiety, he volunteered and then got a paying job. After graduation, Dominic became a welder, a field he loves.

Where We Are Going

It's no secret that youth in Sonoma County are struggling. Many are at risk or are currently homeless. Anxiety, depression, and suicidality in our young people are at record levels, all while there's less government funding available to the nonprofits providing vital services. This has left many youth in need without the necessary support that could change the trajectory of their lives.

Regardless of the current challenges, TLC remains dedicated to our youth. We are nimble and innovative, committed to rising above obstacles to effectively serve as many youth in need as possible. We hope you will join us in bringing three initiatives to fruition to effectively meet the evolving needs of at-risk youth and their families.



1

Farm to Table Program

2

Homekey Project

3

Wellness Engagement Center

Farm to Table Program

Here, students can grow their own plants in the garden, use their harvest to create in the kitchen, and then share with their classmates.

There are three phases to the Farm to Table project. Phase One, the construction of an expansive outdoor event and dining space, has just been completed. Phase Two is now underway and includes an organic garden, chicken coop, and composting. Phase Three will include the remodeling and expansion of the teaching kitchen and a multipurpose gym.

The Farm to Table Program teaches students valuable personal and professional skills. Here, they learn invaluable culinary skills, collaboration, and leadership skills while receiving work readiness coaching. Students also learn what it means to be a good land steward. Participants create meaningful networks and pathways toward careers in culinary arts, hospitality, and agriculture. Students also receive support in developing their Work Readiness Certificate Portfolio, administered by the Sonoma County Office of Education.

As part of Farm to Table, in order to meet the growing needs of at-risk youth, TLC is committed to doubling the size of the current culinary program in 2024 with the vision of expanding some of its components for the benefit of our broader community.

Homekey Project

TLC currently partners with landlords in the community to make housing accessible for youth. We also work closely with the county, providing housing vouchers to make rent more affordable, and offering Rapid Rehousing services for youth who may be currently unhoused or at risk of becoming homeless.

With many residential treatment centers across California now closed, TLC's Rapid Rehousing has become more critical. The Homekey Project is designed to provide additional beds, a child care center, and mobile case management that can be centralized for participants.

Wellness Engagement Center

A stable family provides the necessary solid foundation for youth to launch into adulthood. Youth and families need support at various points in their journey. TLC's planned Wellness Engagement Center is designed to offer families the guidance and resources to help them effectively navigate today's challenges. This community resource will be accessible to those who need it when they need it most.

Thank you



TLC's programs support youth and families in their efforts to find safe and stable housing, develop supportive relationships, gain career skills, and graduate high school. Our services help youth become emotionally and psychologically resilient and decrease substance use—all the while empowering them to positively give back to their communities. We help those we serve discover hidden potential, develop character and self-identity, and live a more prosperous life. We hope you choose to join us in this important work.

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