



2018 is already shaping up to be an interesting year. So much is happening – new laws, budgets, and regulation changes – at the national, state and even local levels that it can be tough to keep up.

Here in San Mateo County, we have continued our active advocacy for improved supports and services for the young people.

The year's first major advocacy activity was the February 1, 2018 **Community Advocacy Forum**, hosted by Edgewood, Caminar and NAMI-San Mateo.







### **Community Advocacy Forum #1**

The first Forum, last November, focused on the hot topic of why it's so hard to get truly supportive housing in our county, and what should be part of an effective holistic well-being program for adults with serious mental health disabilities.

The panel was led by a mom, followed by Edgewood's Community Housing Manager, Caminar's Director of Supported Housing, the owner and program manager of Ohevet's Board & Care, and the Executive Director of Mental Health Association of San Mateo County.

The speakers shared the challenges of finding and accessing supported housing and listed what is available through their programs - about 400 beds, many of which have significant restrictions around access.

The audience raised lots of important ideas, including:

-  "Private-pay" support services, for folks who don't qualify for county programs or need more than Adult Services is providing.
-  A mental health version of the NextDoor app for finding/ sharing housing.
-  Creating a parent Co-op to fund supported housing for their adult children.
-  The need for mentors to help provide community.
-  The major need for MUCH more diversity in "providers" to match the diversity in our community.
-  Asking Facebook and other large employers to include housing for adults with special needs near their campuses.

### **Community Advocacy Forum #2:**

The February 2018 **Forum** was designed to ask how our diverse community can collaborate to create new business models for integrated care, and new funding models beyond the basic "ask the county and a few donors to pay for it" approach.

We had a packed conference room, with community members from ages 23 to 83 all

participating in a lively discussion.

The evening's conversation began with our panel members giving brief overviews of their experiences and ideas.

**Alan Cochran**, the peer member of NAMI-San Mateo's board of directors and a founding member of the Peer Collaborative, spoke first. He is a very strong advocate for our community becoming more effective and inclusive in its supports and services for folks living with mental health challenges.

Alan shared his experiences trying to find a supportive home – a place and people who supported his ongoing recovery. He noted that recovery can be impossible without the bedrock of a safe home.

When he started the search for home and a support network, many of the peer support groups and programs didn't exist. What worked for Alan was having strong friendships nearby and strong ties to family out of state. These kept him moving forward.

Alan's big take-home message: Reach out, and you will find there are others sharing your struggles, places you can go for support, you have **OPTIONS!**

**New Business Models:**

**Dr. Frank Lee** shared his perspective as a parent, biotech entrepreneur, and business innovator.



He noted that serious mental health disorders have the biggest overall negative impact vs. other diseases on Americans' lives starting in our early teens all the way until we reach our 70s. They also were the most expensive to treat – in 2013, \$201 billion were spent.

In addition to the direct cost of care, these illnesses also increase the medical costs for other illnesses folks might have – adding depression to diabetes raises medical costs four-fold, for example. There are costs from lost productivity when employees stay home or struggle to be effective at work.

Mental health supports are the largest cost center in Social Security's Supplemental Security Income (SSI). And some measures show that there are 10-fold more mental health patients in prison/jail than in public hospitals.

Okay, so we have a HUGE cost and impact on people's lives, coupled with: 1) poor insurance reimbursement for acute or chronic care, 2) not NEARLY enough psychiatrists or other mental health workers to provide effective quality care, 3) very few hospital beds available for mental health crises (some counties have NO beds for kids), 4) mostly poor integration of mental health care with into holistic well-being.

And most biopharmaceutical companies have shied away from developing new



treatments because it's really difficult and expensive.

Frank noted that this huge impact on quality of life and costs has certainly caught the attention of companies that employ large workforces. The companies are highly motivated to find ways to bring better health care to their employees.

Back in January, three giant companies — Amazon, Berkshire Hathaway and JPMorgan Chase — announced formation of an independent health care company for their employees in the United States. This new company will be “free from profit-making incentives and constraints,” but there are no details beyond that.

The size and influence of the players means that any new ideas coming from this combo will be watched closely. And their strong data analysis capabilities suggest that they will be tracking closely just how well different approaches work for their employees.

### **The lowly telephone can make a big difference:**

Frank then shared a low-tech innovative approach to delivering mental health services that was created by a psychiatrist and an economist to provide widespread access to reduce the big costs that kick in when illness goes untreated.

In 2008, England and its free National Health Service (NHS) funded the “Improving Access

to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)” program. IAPT now has a \$500 million budget and serves almost one million people per year.

Currently, IAPT is low-tech: it starts with a call to a trained therapist, who sends you on to services based on urgency and need. The program is tracking which treatment approaches work best for people. NHS has put out a Request for Proposal for digital apps that can be added to the IAPT services.

### **Building a better primary care system:**

Frank described a group of young companies (founded 2007-2011) that are “reimagining the primary care experience.” **Iora Health**, **One Medical**, and **Omada Health** all have focused on creating models that couple technology with a commitment to provide high-quality holistic care with a significantly improved experience for the customer.

Frank notes that these companies have raised almost \$500 million from investors, and are partnered with large employers and trade groups all over the county. Mental health – an integral part of holistic health care – hopefully will benefit from these approaches.

### **The next hot thing: apps for mental health:**

The final example of innovation from Frank included **Ginger.io** and **Mindstrong**, two companies using mobile phone measurements of people's behavior to look for changes or patterns that might indicate the need for additional support.

**Ginger.io** has a phone app that provides in-the-moment support from your coach, plus access to therapy and psychiatry – all in a holistic health approach. The company works with 25 employers around the globe to provide services to their employees and families.

**Mindstrong's** founder, Dr. Paul Dagnum, wanted to find more objective ways to understand a person's mental health and thus improve the effectiveness of treatment.

The company uses patterns of a person's interactions on their smartphone to create a model of their brain function. Four years of clinical research coupled with machine learning allows real-time measurement of mood and cognitive function.

For more information on any of these exciting companies, go to their websites.

**Pulling the community together:**

Next up was **Bill Lowell** - family member and a coordinator of San Mateo County's "Home for All" initiative.

"Home for All" is a County-led collaborative of local governments, businesses, schools, advocates and not-for-profit organizations working to increase local housing production and preservation so that folks of all ages,



backgrounds and income levels have the opportunity to call San Mateo County home.

Bill retired from his position as Director of the County's Department of Housing in 2015 after pulling together several affordable housing projects with units reserved for folks grappling with mental health challenges.

Bill noted that the three crucial ingredients of a successful affordable supportive housing program are "**Funding, Land, and Political Will.**"

The local news reports show that many cities are battlegrounds between citizens fighting for more affordable housing density vs. wanting to preserve the current neighborhood experience of those lucky enough to have housing already.

"Home for All" recently hosted a community discussion in Burlingame with 80 residents, city staffers, local workers, etc. sharing ideas and concerns in a positive setting. Future talks are planned to start discussing how to create fair solutions.

Meanwhile, the fight continues around plans to build around the Millbrae train station, and San Mateo's city council denied a 10-unit condo project but okayed a plan for 68 new low-income homes at Bay Meadows.

Bill talked about the efforts in our county to help make more "in-law" units legal by making the permit process easier, and thus increase the number of units for rent.

Our county has only 225,000 homes total, with 2/3 being single-family home. “It’s a good year when the county adds 300 new units,” noted Bill.

Expansion – especially if folks want to keep the low-density model – is hard because only ¼ of the county’s land can be developed. The rest is in parks, watersheds, agriculture, etc.

Check out ALL the info and sign up for updates at

<http://homeforallsmc.com/toolkit/>

#### **Tiny Homes and Fee-for-Service Models:**

**Chip Huggins**, Caminar’s CEO and long-time non-profit and for-profit executive, talked about his agency’s expanding supportive housing programs.

Chip shared an intriguing Tiny Home project he proposed to the county using the site of a long-closed boys’ camp to create an 80-unit community with support staff available 24/7. While some of the tiny homes would be reserved for low-income folks with mental health and other challenges, the community would also welcome other low-income residents including local farm workers.

Chip wants to include social enterprises on the site to provide vocational training and generate income that could cover some of the expenses for this program. The project design also makes the most use possible of existing infrastructure – admin buildings, utilities, and roads.

Caminar, which would hold the master lease, is raising \$3-\$4.5 million in donations to combine with county subsidies and income from rent (\$50 - \$125/night).

In another approach to expand access to services, Caminar has two private-pay programs. **Olivos Private Care** is a “concierge” psychiatric and psychosocial program designed to help improve clients’ overall health and wellness.

The Olivos team includes a psychologist, psychiatrist, care manager, registered nurse, outpatient therapist, job developer, educator, and peer specialist collaborating with the client and their support network.

They can provide individualized services ranging from acute psychiatric emergencies to creating and maintaining a plan of care for sustained living in the community. The cost is based on the services you access, and insurance not accepted.

Chip also mentioned **Linden House**, an apartment building that uses income from clients who can pay “market rate” to subsidize services for low-income clients.

#### **And now for something completely different:**

**Dan Peck**, a director at Third Sector Capital Partners, is a family member who transitioned from a finance career to work on creating innovative ways to find and combine government and philanthropic funds. The goal: to tackle the multi-faceted issues facing

folks dealing with mental health and other serious life challenges.

Third Sector Capital has pulled together some novel combinations of collaborators to increasing affordable supportive housing as part of a holistic wellness approach – even when the uphill political battle seems unwinnable.

Dan noted that the key is finding a way to harness the community will to make things happen. He described how Boards of Supervisors for both Los Angeles County and Santa Clara County carried out significant research into the scale and root causes of their local mental health and housing challenges.

What they learned convinced them that continuing to do nothing because of objections from landlords, homeowners, and others would drive huge costs going forward for the county. Actively working to house the chronically homeless – which would require supportive services as well – could cut tax-payer costs by 79% in LA county!

So the counties shared that information with their communities. Seeing the stark numbers – both in human suffering and tax-payer costs – generated enough momentum to overcome the objections. And it was clear that rent control or other traditional approaches would not be effective.

**Creative collaboration is the key:**

The next key ingredient is to get creative about where the money comes from. LA County combined its own Department of Health Services (DHS) funds with other government partners and a \$4 million infusion from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, a local philanthropic group to create an \$18 million fund.

This was used to create the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool, to which the county will add another \$4 million each year. To put this into perspective, DHS is the nation’s second largest county health services agency with a total budget of over \$3.5 billion.

DHS believes that by making a big investment in permanent supportive housing linked to its health services, it can make a major positive impact on the well-being of the 39,461 homeless citizens in the county. DHS committed to hold 15-year master services agreements as part of the deal structure.

As we all know, just providing a place to live is not always enough to ensure someone will be able to stay well and in place for the long term. DHS is partnered with Brilliant Corners, a nonprofit supportive housing provider (LA and San Francisco offices).

Brilliant Corners (BC) has extensive experience in managing supported housing, with an emphasis on folks who are transitioning from homelessness or locked hospital settings.



The final ingredient for success: a network of property owners throughout LA County. The landlords work through BC to bring properties into the program and negotiate lease terms. BC coordinates lease signing, security deposits, rent payment, and move-in. BC and DHS collaborate to identify tenants, and to set up on-going intensive case management and other needed services so that folks can be successful for the long term.

Dan talked about a similar program that Third Capital has supported in Santa Clara county, this time in partnership with Abode Services providing the wraparound services for tenants. The county provided \$17 million in a combination of housing subsidies and Medi-Cal payments that can apply to many of the services provided by Abode.

Third Capital's team is adept at finding and pulling together these pools of private and public funds, including risk-averse governments and risk-taking philanthropists, and helping the parties find a way to collaborate.

Dan noted that a crucial part of the long-term success will be tracking how well these programs work for people. Positive outcomes will generate cost savings, which can then be recycled into other projects.

### **So how can we change hearts and minds here in San Mateo?**

An audience member asked how we can keep the panel members and the audience

talking and collaborating to bring this change to our county.

Dan pointed out that the continued participation of folks with lived experience is crucial. "The government can't keep telling us what services they will fund. The needs must be identified by the consumers!"

### **Next steps:**

The audience consensus is to reach out to our local panel members to continue brainstorming on how we can bring the county to develop a clear cost-benefit analysis that makes it clear that continued inaction will only make things worse for homeowners, businesses and the broader community.

Dan pointed out that LA's Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool began as a small pilot project backed by a local philanthropist. Once it showed real results, it grew to its current size with a permanent line item in the county budget.

Several audience members plan to work on making the next brainstorming sessions a reality - so keep watching for emails and flyers.

Be part of generating a wave of support for expanding supportive housing in San Mateo County!

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