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## ORGANIZATIONAL EXEMPLARS OF RE-INVENTING INTERNAL OPERATIONS

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### Larkin Street Youth Services: Helping Kids Get Off the Street for Good (1982–2007)

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*Larkin Street Youth Services is a pioneering nonprofit organization that was established in 1981 to serve the growing urban homeless and runaway youth population. What began as a neighborhood effort has evolved into a \$12 million organization over the course of its 25-year history. Larkin Street Youth Services delivers a continuum of services to homeless youth including counseling, housing, education, employment, and HIV services. The agency has received significant local and national attention for the success of its targeted program model and continuum of care services. The history of Larkin Street Youth Services provides an example of the important role of internal operations in an agency's ability to re-invent itself and respond to a larger community need.*

**KEYWORDS** *Organizational history, nonprofit, homeless, runaway youth*

#### INTRODUCTION TO LARKIN STREET YOUTH SERVICES

The staff at Larkin Street Youth Services (also referred to as Larkin Street) “were the safety net that my own parents were unwilling or unable to be.”

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All written and verbal sources used to develop this case study can be found in the Appendix B.

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These words, written by a former client, capture the essence of the role that Larkin Street has played in the lives of thousands of youth since 1981. Larkin Street Youth Services provides support, guidance, motivation, role modeling, counseling, and a continuum of services to some of the most vulnerable youth living in the city of San Francisco, California. The homeless and runaway youth served by Larkin Street reflect histories of childhood sexual, physical, and psychological abuse, struggles with alcohol and substance abuse, mental health issues, and feelings of rejection by parents, families, and communities. Yet, when these youth speak of Larkin Street, they talk about the staff, volunteers, and other clients as family members who provided the support that enabled them to achieve their potential.

Larkin Street is a nonprofit organization delivering a continuum of services to homeless youth that are living in San Francisco. Through 23 programs in 5 service domains operated across 12 sites (see Larkin Street's Service Continuum below), Larkin Street served nearly 3,200 homeless youth ages 12–24 in fiscal year 2006–2007, which is almost 65% of the entire homeless youth population of San Francisco. Furthermore, 76% of youth who complete Larkin Street's comprehensive programs have exited street life. The mission of Larkin Street Youth Services is to create a continuum of services that inspires youth to move beyond the street by nurturing the potential, promoting dignity, and supporting bold steps through comprehensive programming and strategies based on the talent, passion, and dedication of staff, board members, and volunteers.

### Larkin Street's Service Continuum

1. *Point of entry:* Point of Entry Services attempt to reach the estimated 5,700 youth living on the streets of San Francisco through street outreach and the Haight Street Referral Center. The Drop-In Center in the Tenderloin provides access to food, showers, and trained counselors.
2. *Housing services:* Larkin Street offers a range of supportive housing options from emergency shelters like the Diamond Youth Shelter, to transitional housing such as Avenues to Independence, to permanent supportive housing such as the Ellis Street Apartments.
3. *Supportive services:* From point of entry, youth are offered a range of support services including case management, free comprehensive medical care, substance abuse and mental health treatment, and individual and group projects through The Community Art Program.
4. *HIV specialty services:* This program addresses the specific needs of HIV+ homeless youth through a centralized site in San Francisco. The HIV Specialty Clinic delivers outpatient care, the After Care program offers housing options and other services to HIV+ youth. For those requiring 24-hour care and medical support, the Assisted Care program is a 12-bed licensed residential facility for youth living with HIV/AIDS.

5. *Education and employment services*: HIRE UP offers customized employment and education services that allow youth to complete their high school education, enroll in post-secondary education, access technology, and obtain career-track employment.

With a staff of over 150, Larkin Street has been able to successfully capture talent and passion for its mission. The 30-member board of directors has undergone many transitions and today plays an active role in governance and fundraising. Volunteers have played a key role at Larkin Street from its beginning. Like the staff and the Board, volunteers have a passion for providing support to homeless and runaway youth. The evolution of Larkin Street's continuum of services can be viewed in terms of five historical eras: (1) establishing the first multi-service center in San Francisco for homeless and runaway youth (1981–1985), (2) transitioning from a youth center into a community-based service organization (1986–1989), (3) stabilizing a service-delivery organization (1990–1994), (4) expanding the continuum of care (1994–2003), and (5) sustaining growth into the future (2004–2007).

#### THE EARLY YEARS (1981–1985)

“What are you doing here?” asked Jean Richardson, a seminary intern at Old First Presbyterian Church, of a kid sitting alone on the steps of the church. “I have no place to go,” responded the youth. It was 1981 and many youth in the Polk Street Neighborhood and surrounding areas were engaging in survival sex, shoplifting, public urination, and drug dealing often because they had no place to go. Dr. Roger Hull, the Pastor of Old First, recalls a visitor in early 1981 asking, “What is your church doing to help these kids on the street?”

Dr. Hull began raising the consciousness of his congregants about the plight of these youth. William Campbell, a member of the congregation, and later a Polk Street Town Hall (PSTH) and Larkin Street Board Member, recalls that people in the congregation were willing to address this social problem and formed a task force to look into this issue. What they discovered was startling. As documented by William Campbell, “Many [of the youth] had been betrayed by families that were unable or unwilling to care for them. Neglected, sexually abused, beaten up, kicked out, and in some instances shuffled from foster home to foster home, they were not runaways, but throwaways, discards. They were not children coming to San Francisco with flowers in their hair, but children who had no one to care for them, nowhere to live, and no way to survive without resorting to hustling.” Meanwhile, the methods of survival utilized by the youth and homosexual activity in general were becoming more visible. The police began conducting community sweeps resulting in more than 450 arrests.

In response to the findings of the task force and concerns of the community, Old First and a community organization called Community United Against Violence convened the first PSTH community meeting in the fall of 1981. In the initial meetings, members of the religious community, neighbors, merchants, and kids on the street met in working groups on topics such as health, safety, housing, substance abuse, sexual minority youth, and prostitution. These working groups, which often included guest speakers to provide content expertise, intended to identify the issues faced by the youth on the streets. The PSTH Steering Committee was formed to address these concerns.

In January of 1983, PSTH became incorporated as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization. PSTH membership met quarterly and the PSTH Board of Directors met monthly. For the next nine months, PSTH worked to identify the most urgent issues in the community. In their discussions, they began to question how to design a youth shelter program. By this time, homelessness among adults was receiving more attention from Mayor Diane Feinstein than was homelessness among youth. In reaction to this important oversight, a coalition was formed called the Youth Emergency Services Coalition (YES) comprised of Catholic Social Services, Youth Advocates, Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, various community groups, members of the gay/lesbian community, religious groups, and PSTH.

When PSTH joined with YES to lobby for a youth shelter system and a multi-service center, they became increasingly focused on one singular purpose: to establish a "place" for young people on the streets to go. Despite the initial denial of City funding, many of the organizations serving youth in YES were not willing to give up so easily. The PSTH Board continued to raise awareness and funds, primarily among the religious community, and in late 1983 secured \$3,000 in self-development funds, which was matched locally by an additional \$3,000. At the same time, four other organizations in the YES coalition received \$180,000 for a federal demonstration project. The funds were allocated to an agency collaborative consisting of Youth Advocates, Catholic Social Services, Hospitality House, and Urban Research Associates to establish a community-based program for homeless youth. The grant aimed to determine if outreach and counseling would positively impact juvenile prostitution and homelessness.

The five-agency consortium began to advocate for additional City funding to secure a shelter and to allow PSTH to hire two staff persons. By December 1, 1983, the mayor granted PSTH \$68,000 as a match to the federal funding to open the Larkin Street Youth Center. During this period, the current PSTH Board Chair, Jon Hertzam, was experiencing the effects of a new disease beginning to run rampant in San Francisco. As Jean Richardson reflected,

One day Jon and I were driving on Van Ness Avenue. We were going to have a picnic 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 of the first cases in New York City of the disease that we now call AIDS. There was no treatment then. Jon was one of the first 60 victims of AIDS in San Francisco.

This was only the beginning of the impact of this disease on Larkin Street staff and clients. HIV/AIDS services would later become a core programming area. In early 1984, Jean Richardson succeeded Jon Hertzsam as Board Chair and would continue serving on the Board in varying capacities for the next decade.

Recognizing the importance of political support and community buy-in, Larkin Street Youth Center was officially opened on February 7, 1984 with the mayor in attendance. Initially called a youth intervention and prostitution program, the following is an excerpt from the first mission statement of Larkin Street: “Our shared mission and purpose is to reach and to provide meaningful alternatives to prostitution to the most at-risk youth in the Tenderloin and Polk Street area of San Francisco.” The 2,000 square foot two-story office and storefront located at 1040 Larkin Street was ideally situated to reach youth both on Polk Street and the Tenderloin—areas in which youth prostitution was a considerable issue. The center was intended to be one location in a network of services for homeless youth, namely the Homeless Youth Network. In January, Catholic Social Services opened the Diamond Youth Shelter as another location in the network, providing 20 beds for emergency, short-term housing for youth. The collaboration between Larkin Street and Diamond Youth Shelter offered a refuge for youth during both the day and night.

Larkin Street Youth Center opened as a true collaborative with PTSH as the fiscal sponsor and administrative overseer, Youth Advocates as the lead agency responsible for the overall operations of the center, Catholic Social Services providing co-located staff, Hospitality House out-stationing an outreach worker at the center, and URSA Institute responsible for a comprehensive evaluation of the center. This Homeless Youth Network created a comprehensive integrated services network to prevent the duplication of services.

The Larkin Street staff immediately began to develop trusting relationships with many youth living on the streets. These relationships would become the cornerstone of Larkin Street’s approach to offering youth positive alternatives to street life. Staff and volunteers engaged youth through street outreach and provided individual and group counseling, food vouchers, and referrals for housing and job training by partner organizations. A small medical clinic provided assistance and referrals. During the first six months of operation, word spread quickly on the streets and more youth came to the center every day. Despite the fact that the center was not operating at full capacity, over three-quarters of the youth who met with counselors

four times or more were able to break free from their daily street survival methods. While some were able to return home, others were beginning to find jobs and housing. Staff members were beginning to identify the lack of housing as a key barrier facing the youth.

By September of 1984, the mission statement had changed slightly due to the evolving nature of the center. The purpose had now become "To provide an exit from street life and prostitution, concentrating on those most vulnerable (those very young and new to the streets) and supporting others more deeply involved in the lifestyle when they demonstrate an interest in changing their lives." The collaborative designed and delivered services while the PSTH Board developed the infrastructure to support center operations. Systems were designed to track individual contributions and fundraising efforts and to prepare for the dissemination of monthly reports. Corporate and foundation partnerships were built and nurtured. For example, the start of an enduring partnership with the Levi-Strauss Corporation began through the donation of 100 pairs of jeans for the youth. Concurrently, the Community Relations Coordinator sought to improve public relations with police and community groups, as well as identify funding sources and support.

Even though the Larkin Street Youth Center began to develop both public and community support, it lacked the funds necessary to continue operations beyond December 1984, when the federal demonstration grant ended. They feared that they would not be able to secure additional funding to support the center. A September 1984 editorial in the *San Francisco Examiner* stated loud and clear: "Sorry, folks, the kids *aren't* all right." This led to the establishment of a subcommittee of the Mayor's Criminal Justice Council that conducted a detailed study on runaway and homeless youth and found that they were fleeing home environments of sexual and physical abuse, selling their bodies, and suffering from mental health and substance abuse problems.

A combination of media coverage, advocacy efforts, and compelling evidence encouraged Mayor Feinstein to support the center by helping to secure a supplemental appropriation from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to fund the Larkin Street Youth Center for the remainder of the fiscal year. Recognizing the potential instability of such funding, the PSTH and others within the Homeless Youth Network stepped up their advocacy efforts by pushing for the creation of state legislation that would provide state funds for services to homeless and runaway youth. Legislative bill A.B. 1596 (Agos) was passed as the Homeless Act of 1985 and supported a two-year pilot project on an emergency service system for homeless youth in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Larkin Street became a beneficiary of this landmark legislation.

While contending with funding and public support issues, it became clear that managing the center by an agency collaborative was difficult. As

noted by Jed Emerson, the unified vision and passion that created the center faded once the goal was achieved, especially when confronted by the reality of managing potential and actual daily conflicts and differing ideologies in the performance of services. The relations among the organizations in the collaborative began to deteriorate.

After ending their contractual relationship with Youth Advocates, PSTH took on full administrative and service responsibility of the Larkin Street Youth Center and began their evolution from a grassroots community organization to a community-based human service organization. The challenge of this transition was compounded by the fact that many of the other agencies began withdrawing their staff from the center (resulting in a loss of expertise and tacit knowledge) leaving PSTH with three staff persons: Kathleen Jimenez, Executive Director; Greg Day, Community Relations Coordinator; and Judy Diamond, Administrative Assistant. Kathleen Jimenez would resign soon after. Fortunately, the center continued to be supported by volunteers, but PSTH was facing its biggest test to date. As William Campbell reflects back over this period, Jed Emerson was considered by many to be Larkin Street Youth Center's "saving grace" when he signed on as executive director in November 1985:

A rail-thin, 26-year old chain smoker with a trademark black leather jacket, jeans and boots and no car, Emerson had credibility on the street. He also had a Masters in Social Work and had been on a team of consultants that the Presbyterian [Health, Education and Welfare Association] had provided to advise [PSTH] on its options a few months earlier. Emerson poured heart and soul into stabilizing the organization and moving its mission forward.

#### FROM A GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION TO A COMMUNITY-BASED HUMAN SERVICE ORGANIZATION (1986–1989)

Jed Emerson provided the visionary leadership that led to Larkin Street's early successes. In January of 1986, Emerson prepared a lengthy and comprehensive report for the PSTH Board entitled "Polk Street Town Hall and Larkin Street Youth Center: An Evaluation of the Present, Recommendations for Our Future." Building on the report findings and Emerson's assessment of the organization, the recommendations focused on board structure and functioning, membership and community involvement, fund development and fiscal management, and future program priorities and service delivery needs and gaps. These recommendations laid the groundwork for transforming Larkin Street into a successful service-delivery organization.

Emerson and the Board worked tirelessly in early 1986 to rebuild the staff, develop management systems, define the organizational culture, im-



prove and enhance service delivery, identify funding opportunities, build and repair the reputation of PSTH, and strengthen relations with other organizations in the community. However, no one could have anticipated what would come next. At 11:30 pm on May 21, 1986 a fire began in the drop-in area of the Larkin Street Youth Center, taking the life of the custodian, Jose Castro, and destroying the center.

Emerson and the PSTH Board immediately rallied to identify a new location and emergency funds. As evidence of the important role that the center now played in the lives of so many youth, Larkin Street clients began to hold vigil in front of the burned-out center where they appealed, through media coverage, to Mayor Feinstein to reopen the center and requested donations of money, food, and blankets. Some spoke with courage and strength of the impact that the center had had on them. "I am not afraid to say who I am," Joseph, an 18-year old, told a *San Francisco Examiner* reporter. "The people here at the center really helped me. I don't work the streets anymore. I've been off drugs about three months. I've been a hustler since I was 10."

Though the fire was a real tragedy, it was also a blessing in disguise. "The fire set us back," recalls Emerson, "but it also created opportunities for us. 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." Not only did the fire ultimately result in increased public awareness of the plight of homeless youth, but also produced approximately \$60,000 in donations. The successful fundraising underscored the importance for PSTH of a strong individual donor base.

Larkin Street reopened in September of 1986 and, due to damage to the neighboring building, expanded into two adjacent storefronts. By the end of the year, PSTH and Larkin Street had accomplished much. First and foremost, they had achieved greater comprehension of the agency mission at all levels of the organization. Their data tracking enabled them to paint a picture of significant impact. In 1986, an average of 35 youth per month became clients and were involved in intensive one-on-one counseling; approximately 30 youth came to the drop-in center each day; and there were outreach contacts with more than 1,500 youth. A new accounting system ensured better budgeting and internal controls of what had now become a \$340,000 budget. The PSTH voted to officially change their name from Polk Street Town Hall to Larkin Street Youth Center in January 1987.

Under Emerson's leadership, Larkin Street developed its programs and began to receive increasing media coverage, including national exposure through articles in the *New York Times* and *Newsweek*. The coverage not only brought to light the troubles faced by homeless youth in cities like San Francisco, but also shared with the public the important work that Larkin Street was doing, and attracted talented volunteers and employees to the

organization. In the late 1980s, the clarity of mission and purpose that the Board and staff had worked so hard to achieve was starting to unravel. Board Member Henry Safrit recalls the mood during this time, “There was no long-range planning or concept of what we were supposed to be doing or what we wanted to be doing. It created a lot of tension on the Board, [especially] between the Board and the staff.” In the summer of 1989, Jed Emerson resigned as Executive Director after nearly four years of service.

#### FINAL PHASE IN THE TRANSFORMATION TO A SERVICE-DELIVERY ORGANIZATION (1990–1994)

When Diane Flannery succeeded Jed Emerson as Executive Director, it was a time of crisis for the agency both internally and externally. Externally, the homeless youth population was growing, AIDS was beginning to emerge in the youth population, and a new, more addictive drug was hitting the streets, namely crystal methamphetamine or “ice.” Internally, the organization was not adequately managed, had many obligations and few resources, and the staff were burned out. Michael Kennedy, who was promoted to Program Director under Flannery, recalls that the clinical files were incomplete and haphazard, time sheets were not filled out, and the petty cash box was full of IOUs. Moreover, the staff and volunteers were talking to reporters and individuals external to the agency without following procedures and protocols and were, at times, failing to protect the confidentiality of the clients. It was clear that the agency was in need of substantial infrastructure development.

The senior managers, with the support of the Board, quickly began to create the infrastructure needed for more effective service delivery. During this time Douglas became the Board Chair and worked with Flannery to develop a strategic plan. According to Jim Canales, “Penelope was a very strong leader who was trying to make that evolutionary step in her role as Board Chair, but there was a lot of hard growing.” For some of the board members who joined the Board in Emerson’s era, it was a particularly difficult transition from an operating board to more of a governance board. While Penelope and others were shepherding this process, the agency contracted with an outside facilitator to steer the agency through the process of reshaping the mission and developing a strategic plan.

This process involved the youth and staff sharing their views with the Board about the type of services needed. While the agency had always valued and respected client input, they had never been given such a strong voice in directing the future of the agency. This inclusive process of empowering the youth and the staff resulted in the creation of a mission statement that still guides the work of the agency today. Though fine-tuned over the years, it has remained largely the same. Printed on the front cover of the

1992–1993 Annual Report, it said that “Larkin Street Youth Center’s mission is to create a network of communities that inspire youth to move beyond the streets. We will nurture potential, promote dignity, and support bold steps by all.”

In the meantime, the agency expanded its staff, launched innovative programs, and achieved considerable public recognition. Drop-in and case management services were expanded from five days a week to seven. Recognizing the need to offer services for 18–23 year olds, Larkin Street launched the first aftercare program to provide services to HIV positive youth between the ages of 18 and 23. Another area of growth was the volunteer program, which by the end of 1990–1991 fiscal year included 70 volunteers.

During this time, Larkin Street was impacted with what was called the AIDS third wave. It was an epidemic that hit the youth in an unprecedented way. Knowing that homeless youth would be disproportionately affected by their high risk behaviors, Larkin Street responded by increasing their HIV services and contacted AIDS Emergency Services to secure housing vouchers for the clients. This intervention was later called Housing as Harm Reduction. Next, the agency made two very controversial decisions: (1) to establish confidential HIV testing of youth in their medical clinic, and (2) to establish a needle exchange program. The medical clinic would be one of the first sites to do HIV testing and was operated through the San Francisco Department of Public Health’s Special Programs for Youth.

The Board’s decision to establish a needle exchange program was seen as a “life or death” decision even though they were accused, by some in the community, of encouraging the youth to do drugs. They saw no other choice if they wanted to provide youth with opportunities to live meaningful lives. At the same time that they were dealing with the daily challenges of diagnosing and treating HIV positive youth, staff and board members were becoming ill with and dying from HIV/AIDS. Larkin Street received one of the first grants from the Magic Johnson Foundation to fund funerals. The agency also developed other systems to deal with the impact that HIV/AIDS was having on them, including developing a scholarship fund in honor of those who passed away. While it was an emotionally trying time for the agency, the agency was receiving national recognition for its pioneering work in the HIV/AIDS field.

Despite the challenges created by HIV/AIDS, Larkin Street was able to expand educational programming, cultural responsiveness, and residential programming. A consultant was hired to conduct a feasibility study on the planned residential program, including the use of entrepreneurial ventures for sustaining the program. The first entrepreneurial venture took place in July of 1993 when Larkin Street took over the Diamond Youth Shelter from Catholic Social Services. The feasibility study also led to the idea of a business venture focused on job training and employment for youth. Though there was tension as to whether or not the business would remain

under the auspices of Larkin Street, the Board eventually decided to spin-off the business venture with a plan for the profits being shared with Larkin Street. The spin-off was called Larkin Street Business Ventures and the youth employment opportunities were related to a franchise partnership with Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream. Flannery left Larkin Street in 1993 to become the Executive Director of Larkin Street Business Ventures and Douglas resigned as Board President to become the Board President of the spin-off organization. Today, the spin-off organization is known as Juma Ventures.

The Board had made great progress under Douglas and Flannery's leadership. Flannery was instrumental in professionalizing the agency in becoming outcome focused. Nonetheless, with changes in leadership, there is a certain amount of staff and volunteer attrition that often occurs in the transition to new leadership. Flannery recalls that they initially lost about 85% of the staff, many of whom were volunteers, and some of the board members. As a result, a significant amount of time was spent rebuilding the staff and the Board. As Flannery noted years later, "Changing the mission changed the outcomes and measures of success, which also changed people's jobs and raised the standards." By 1993, the agency had expanded from a staff of ten and a budget of \$600,000 to a staff of approximately 40 and a budget of \$2.3 million (see Appendix A).

While Mary Lester succeeded Penelope Douglas as Board Chair, Roxane White succeeded Diane Flannery as Executive Director. Although White would be Executive Director for only a year, she made a huge impact on the organization, especially through her fundraising skills.

### BUILDING THE CONTINUUM OF CARE (1994–2003)

Roxane White's tenure was cut short when her husband was offered a job in Colorado. These changes reflected a critical juncture in the life of the agency and the board decided to launch a national search for a new executive director. The Search Committee selected Anne Stanton to become Executive Director of Larkin Street in May of 1994. As the Associate Executive Director of Covenant House of New York City, Stanton had helped build a comprehensive service delivery system for homeless and runaway youth. Stanton brought with her the knowledge and experience related to both youth and organizational development. When Stanton came on, the program consisted of Diamond Youth Shelter, the Drop-in Center, the Aftercare program, and the small Foster Care Family Program.

Over the next 10 years, Anne Stanton would significantly expand Larkin Street's programming and build a strong foundation for long-term sustainability. When Stanton assumed leadership of the agency in 1994, Board Member Kennedy recalls this period in the agency's history as chaotic. "It was hard to keep up with what was going on with the kids. We didn't have anti-virals yet,

kids were murdered and they were doing harder and harder drugs. We were also experiencing such high rates of unemployment and the disintegration of families. While we were on track for doing the best we could in a crisis situation, Anne also urged us to reach for a higher level of service for youth.”

Kennedy remembers that Stanton helped the agency to plan in a more purposeful way, especially related to fundraising. She also started to involve the program staff in program design and development. Stanton also saw the need for change in the composition of the Board and worked closely with the Board Chair to move the Board toward an increased understanding of their roles and responsibilities. While Larkin Street had long enjoyed the contributions of individual donors, fund development efforts needed to be improved in order to secure a diversified funding base. The Board improved in this area incrementally over the years. From 1996 to 2002, the amount of individual board giving increased from \$29,000 to \$184,000.

The Board identified a gap in housing and raised the funds to launch five residential programs under Stanton’s tenure. The agency took bold new steps in launching capital campaigns for remodeling and constructing buildings. The first new program launched under Stanton was the Haight Street Referral Center. Recognizing a significant homeless and runaway youth population in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, the agency opened a storefront in 1994 to reach this underserved population (reaching 1,926 youth in the first nine months of operation). As a result of opening the center, the Diamond Youth Shelter located only five blocks away saw a 60% increase in youth seeking services after only six months of opening the Referral Center.

By the end of the 1994–1995 fiscal year, Larkin Street had reached more than 2,000 kids. This success demonstrated the importance of building a continuum of care that included outreach, crisis services, case management, education, medical care, art therapy, and residential services. The agency expanded their existing programs and initiated new programs, such as an Assisted Care Facility to provide a first-of-its-kind residential care for young adults in the late stages of AIDS and the Vocational Training Program to provide job preparedness training and job placement. In addition to this program expansion, the agency was awarded a nearly \$1 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to implement Avenues to Independence, a model transitional living program for 18–23 year old youth. Also during the 1994–1995 fiscal year, the installation of a permanent display of mosaics at the Powell Street BART and Muni station was completed by Larkin Street youth that gave them a sense of accomplishment as well as empowerment and life skills. The group projects helped the youth build social skills, understand the importance of teamwork, and express their stories of survival.

Following the receipt of the Award for Excellence (sponsored by the Chevron Corporation and The Management Center), the agency embarked on another strategic planning process in 1995. In November of 1996, the

five-year strategic plan was adopted for 1997–2002. With a professional staff of 60, a budget of \$4.5 million, and a refined mission statement, the agency used the strategic plan to continue building the continuum of care. The opening of the Assisted Care/Aftercare (AC/AC) facility in December of 1997 marked the next step in building the continuum at a cost of \$1.8 million to purchase and renovate the building. The assisted care component of the HIV/AIDS facility offers 24-hour care, including on-site medical services, and a variety of support services including case management, recreation, meals, and counseling. In connection with this program, Larkin Street launched several federally-funded national demonstration projects featuring innovative models of services to youth with HIV.

In 1998 the agency learned that they would be selected as one of only five agencies nationally to receive Ryan White CARE Title IV funding through the first round of Adolescent Services Initiative grants administered by the Health and Human Services Administration's HIV/AIDS Bureau. Serving as another federally-funded national demonstration site, Larkin Street was the only agency on the West coast awarded the funding, which provided \$360,000 annually for a period of three years. The purpose of the initiative was to increase the number of HIV positive youth aged 13–24 who would receive primary medical care and support services in a youth sensitive environment. The grant allowed for the creation of an HIV Specialty Clinic for youth.

The agency sought to eliminate educational barriers for older youth, ages 18–23, through its accredited on-site school, a joint project with the San Francisco Unified School District. The Older Youth Education Program was designed to provide group instruction and individual tutoring in the areas of English as a Second Language, basic reading and math, and General Equivalency Diploma (GED) preparation. Through “The Steps to College” program, in collaboration with San Francisco State University, students were able to attend classes and earn college credits and scholarships for further study. In order to address the other needs of youth ages 18–23 who aged out of traditional services, the Lark-Inn was designed in 1999 to provide emergency and short-term housing and support services related to employment, case management, life skills and health services. The capital campaign was successful in raising the \$300,000 necessary to renovate the former nightclub that was leased to establish the Lark-Inn.

In 2000, Larkin Street learned that Central City Hospitality House would be closing all of its youth programs, including Orland House which was the City's only transitional living facility for youth ages 12–17. “With support from the City, our Board and staff carefully weighed the impact that this closure would have on SF [San Francisco] and on so many young lives, and decided to take action . . . the decision to acquire the Orlando House property and program was not . . . simple, but the need *was* just as compelling . . . we could not afford to lose a crucial program for young people whose circumstances have already left them abandoned,” wrote Stanton in “Streetwise,”

Larkin Street's Newsletter, Summer 2000. The 12-bed facility was renamed the LOFT (Larkin Opportunities for Transition) and it took many months to re-open the facility due to a delay in completing the re-licensing process.

To invest in increased programming and infrastructure development the agency needed to increase unrestricted revenues. They reached out to the community and during the 1996–97 fiscal year achieved a 24% increase in the amount of gifts received. The Friends of Larkin Street, an auxiliary fundraising group, was successful with local fundraising events, such as the Macy's Passport event and board members became more involved in donor cultivation. The Board also supported the work of the agency through their participation in a variety of task forces (e.g., Real Estate and Investment, Board Leadership and Development, Public Relations/Marketing). In connection with the 15th anniversary of the agency, there was also a branding strategy and website that were developed by pro-bono services in 2001 (a yellow and black "street sign" motif with a new tagline of the mission: helping kids get off the street for good).

By the beginning of 2001, after more than 15 years of services, Larkin Street had finally completed their long-term efforts to design and deliver a comprehensive, integrated, and effective model of services for homeless and at-risk youth. In 2001 the Board voted to officially change the agency's name from Larkin Street Youth Center to Larkin Street Youth Services to better describe the breadth and depth of the continuum of programs. Although the agency had finally succeeded in building the full continuum of care, they were more committed than ever to maintain the momentum by continuing to fill service gaps, launching new programming, and expanding and enhancing existing programs.

In the early 2000s, a major recession hit the Bay Area. It was a painful time for many nonprofits and Larkin Street faced a \$176,000 loss in public funding due to a cut in the Governor's budget. They would be able to recoup these funds as a result of their diverse funding base and the availability of unrestricted revenue. On May 7, 2003, the agency held the first annual awards dinner and fundraiser called Paving the Way. This inaugural event was a huge success and would thereafter continue to provide a vehicle for recognizing the agency's major supporters and for raising unrestricted funds.

Larkin Street developed a partnership with Bain & Company and The Bridgespan Group to develop their FY2004–FY2008 Strategic Plan. The process resulted in a strategic plan including a visual depiction of the agency's theory of change and plans for the future. The agency's future directions included: (a) program expansion (e.g., additional housing programs, dissemination of the agency's service model), (b) infrastructure development (e.g., add 18.5 full-time positions), (c) budget expansion (e.g., increase operating budget from \$9.8 million in FY04 to \$12.1 million in FY08), and (d) fund development (e.g., increase unrestricted funding through fundraising and foundation support, develop corporate partnerships).

In the midst of the strategic planning process in 2003, Anne Stanton announced her plans to resign as Executive Director. Anticipating the loss of leadership, a transition team of senior managers and a board liaison person created a transition plan and proposed a staff-board transition team to take charge when Stanton left in the fall of 2003. Having had success in finding Stanton after conducting a national search for executive director in 1994, the agency employed the recruitment strategy again and hired an executive search firm. In the meantime, the transition team, in partnership with the Board, managed the daily operations of the agency.

### INTO THE FUTURE AND BEYOND (2004–2006)

During this interim period, the transition team met on a weekly basis and kept the Board actively engaged to provide continuity during this time. As a result, there was increased dialogue with the Board that led to greater participatory decision-making. However, decision-making on a daily basis was difficult. Despite these challenges, the transition team and the Board successfully maintained the stability of the organization until Virginia “Ginny” Price was hired as Executive Director in August 2004. Price came with over 27 years of nonprofit management experience in homeless and runaway youth programs; however, after only one year, she left the agency in the midst of a re-evaluation of the agency’s management structure. As a new organizational structure emerged, Larkin Street was ready for its next executive director.

During this leadership transition period, the agency held its first Corporate Leadership Breakfast with representatives from over 50 Bay Area companies as a Larkin Street fundraiser. Several past and present board members made significant contributions to create an operating reserve and the agency initiated a Planned Giving Program. In June 2005 the agency held the First Annual Bay Area CFO of the Year Awards in partnership with the *San Francisco Business Times* and sponsored by Comerica Bank and Deloitte to honor chief financial officers who have played a critical role in the success of their companies and to the economic growth and stability of the Bay Area. The event attracted 400 guests and raised \$200,000 to benefit the agency.

The Board’s decision to appoint Sherilyn Adams as Executive Director in August 2005 was a positive turning point for the agency. Adams was well known in the San Francisco youth services community and had been a senior manager at Larkin Street. It was her first experience as Executive Director and she had to “hit the ground running” in order to revitalize the organization and raise its profile at the city, state, and national levels. Immediately after her appointment, Adams re-engaged in discussions with Catholic Charities to acquire Guerrero House, a 20-bed transitional living program for 18–24 year olds with mental health and substance abuse issues.



In her first year, Adams also shifted quickly into her public relations role when she hosted a visit from California's First Lady, Maria Shriver, related to her statewide tour of "community programs that work." The visit continued to raise the profile of the agency in the community, as media coverage had done in the past. Larkin Street's work has been featured in over 100 newspaper and magazine articles related to establishing San Francisco's first homeless youth multi-service center in the eighties, providing expertise on HIV/AIDS related to homeless youth in the nineties, and promoting youth empowerment public art exhibitions throughout its history.

The agency continued to carry on its advocacy tradition that began with the inception of the Drop-in Center. The staff served on a variety of advisory boards and committees, but the big difference was that these advocacy efforts now took place inside the walls of City Hall as opposed to outside on the sidewalk. In addition to recognizing the importance of advocating for homeless and runaway youth in the community, the agency also understood the importance of providing youth with a vehicle for advocating and providing input within the agency's programs (the Youth Advisory Council).

## CONCLUSION

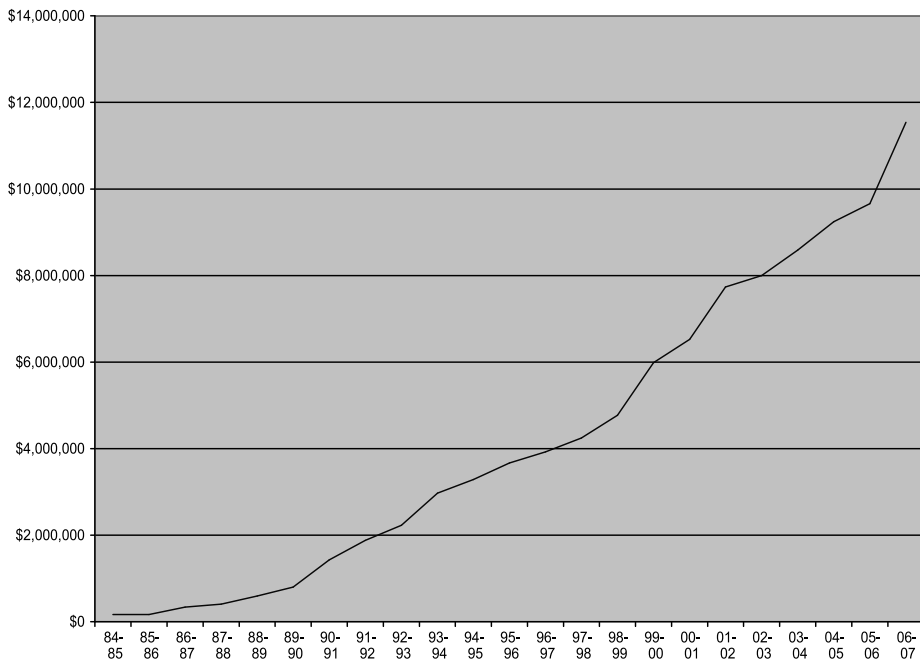
The passion and dedication of committed individuals who created Larkin Street continue and have helped the agency survive challenging times while pioneering new services. From an agency with a budget of less than \$200,000 in 1984 to a budget of over \$11.5 million in 2007, Larkin Street has successfully positioned itself "to provide a continuum of services that inspires homeless and runaway youth to move beyond the streets" for many years to come.

In 2007, Larkin Street's continuum of services included 23 programs across 12 locations in five program areas: (1) Point of Entry, (2) Housing Services, (3) Wraparound (supportive) Services, (4) HIV Health Services, and (5) HIRE UP: Education & Employment. These services are based on strong collaborative partnerships with nonprofit, public, and for-profit organizations. The organizational capacities needed to deliver services include: (a) fundraising, marketing, and public relations strategies, (b) advocacy work, (c) talented and dedicated staff, board members, and volunteers, (d) visionary agency leadership, and (e) a strong and unrelenting commitment to address the changing needs of homeless and runaway youth as described in the agency's mission. As noted in Larkin Street's FY 2004–2008 Strategic Plan, "Larkin Street's history reflects a tradition of purposeful, mission-driven growth that has occurred in direct response to the changing needs of the homeless and runaway youth that the agency exists to serve."

While there will always be challenges, Larkin Street has become a preeminent agency providing homeless youth with an opportunity to achieve

their full potential. Through Larkin Street's continued work, homeless and runaway youth will not be forgotten. A former client who wrote that Larkin Street was "the safety net that my own parents were unwilling or unable to be," continued by writing: "That sense of safety helped me take risks in my life (like going to college, doing unpaid internships, and traveling around the world) that were essential for me to advance as far I have personally and professionally . . . thank you for being there and helping me become who I am today." In 2007 Larkin Street helped 3,199 youth realize their potential and has served as a safety net for over 25 years.

#### APPENDIX A: BUDGET TREND LINE



#### APPENDIX B: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

##### Interviews

Jed Emerson—Executive Director, 1985–1989

Diane Flannery—Executive Director, 1989–1993; staff 1988–1989

Roxane White—Executive Director, 1993–1994; volunteer/staff, 1985–1993

Anne Stanton—Executive Director, 1994–2003

Sherilyn Adams—Executive Director, 2005–present; staff, 2003–2005

Michael Kennedy—Senior Manager, 1988–2001  
 Lara Tannenbaum—Senior Manager, 2001–present; MSW Intern  
 Peter Carpou—Art Program Director, 1988–present  
 William Campbell—Board Member, 1983–1990; 1998–2006  
 Jay Cuetara—Board Member, 1997–2006  
 James Canales—Board Chair, 1997–1999; Board Member, 1991–1999  
 Ray Brown—Board Member, 1990–1996  
 John Kalin—Board Member, 1990–1997  
 Richard Baker–Lehne—Board Member, 1988  
 Henry Safrit, M.D.—Board Member, 1987  
 Irene Holmes—Board Member, 1983–1994  
 Rev. Jean Richardson—Board Chair, 1983–1990; Board Member, 1990–1994

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