

Bill Wilson Center Chief Executive Officer

The Board seeks a forward-thinking innovator to lead one of Santa Clara County's largest and most effective organizations that helps unhoused, underserved youth and families make the transition to self-confident independence.

The new CEO will have three overarching objectives:

- *Financially and otherwise strengthen an already strong Santa Clara County-centered nonprofit providing a continuum of housing, counseling and behavioral health services;*
- *Sustainably grow programs and services by expanding services within the current geography and/or by extending the agency's geographic reach;*
- *Advocate within the County, the State, and the Nation for policies and funding that improve housing, counseling and supportive services for youth and families.*

BACKGROUND

Founded in 1973 as an adolescent and family counseling center by former Santa Clara Mayor Bill Wilson, the agency opened its first shelter for runaway youth in 1977. CEO Sparky Harlan joined the organization in 1983, and has led the organization as its chief executive for almost 40 years. She transformed Bill Wilson Center from an underfunded nonprofit facing a 50% cut to its then \$300,000 budget, to one of Santa Clara County's leading suppliers of wrap-around, comprehensive support services for homeless youth and families, with an emphasis on supporting youth who have interacted with the foster care or juvenile justice systems.

The Bill Wilson Center's ultimate goal is to end youth & family homelessness and poverty in next generations by providing a range of tailored housing, counseling and supportive service solutions that help people develop personal assets and lead independent lives. The organization has a staff of 218, a budget of over \$30 million, and its 30 programs serve more than 4,700 people annually. Bill Wilson Center "walks the talk" when it comes to [assuring representation](#) within its ranks, believing that inclusion at the staff and board level of those with different perspectives, lived experiences, races, competencies, income levels, identities and orientations is central to its success.

The retirement of a CEO who has shaped an organization for 40 years and built a strong foundation provides an opportunity for a new leader to bring in new ideas and take the organization to new heights.

The Board expects to continue the organization's founding emphasis on housing, counseling, behavioral health, and supportive services for youth and families as defined by those in need. Careful expansion of services to adults and families who are intrinsically connected to youth is also strongly supported, as is continued focus on policy and funding advocacy at the County, State and Federal level. The Executive Team is well equipped to continue this work.

Needs among Bill Wilson Center clients will certainly evolve over the coming years. Indeed, we are witnessing a dramatic increase in the number of unhoused and housing-insecure families in Santa Clara County and adjacent regions. Bill Wilson Center programs have continually evolved to address emerging trends in homelessness, whether that is more supportive housing for families, mental health services for LGBTQ youth, grief counseling in response to the pandemic, or a centralized call center for referrals to immediate shelter and other supportive services. This adaptability is built into the organization's core approach to care.

The Chief Executive Officer, Executive Team, staff and Board will continue to grow the organization's revenues, scale, programs and positive impact with the goal of helping those who are housing-insecure make the transition to independence.

BASIC FUNCTION

The CEO will lead Bill Wilson Center by maintaining strategic focus on underserved youth, families and communities, and through efficient management of staff in a highly matrixed organization. The CEO will manage the big picture with a focus on advancing the Center's talent, culture, funding and fundraising in support of housing and supportive service programs that deliver practical impact.

Bill Wilson Center provides a sophisticated matrix of housing, behavioral health and supportive services, each attached to one or more funding sources. The CEO must negotiate with funding and oversight agencies informed by a strong understanding of challenges faced by housing-insecure youth, families and adults. The Bill Wilson Team is client-responsive, delivering services and innovating according to on-the-ground realities faced by clients. The CEO must understand supportive housing programs, behavioral health/MediCal funding and compliance issues, the juvenile justice and foster care systems, and have a strong understanding of inequities in our society based on gender, race, and intersectional identities to deliver appropriate services with the desired impact.

The CEO must also have a personal connection to communities served, including: those facing extreme poverty, involved with the criminal justice system, underserved immigrant communities, unhoused students, and youth aging out of foster care or justice system. These populations are overwhelmingly individuals of color with fewer resources and less access to opportunity, support and education. Bill Wilson Center will remain a force for change that listens and responds with empathy to need, and provides the kind of support that encourages self sufficiency. The CEO will be the chief advocate and fundraiser for the organization, with an ability to speak prominently and passionately about effective programs and system change that advance outcomes for youth, families and adults.

Specific responsibilities and oversight duties include:

LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

- Working with the Executive Team, assess and make decisions on the organization's strategy, direction, culture, and housing and supportive services provided; gaining support of the Board, County, State and Federal funders; develop productive partnerships with other organizations serving Bill Wilson Center clients;
- Maintain an organizational climate that attracts, retains, motivates and develops a multi-cultural, diverse, high-quality staff and Board;
- Create an inclusive environment that embraces decisiveness, collaboration, transparency, open communication and accountability.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

- Assure the financial strength of the Bill Wilson Center, and in particular that services provided are sustainably funded, that debt is avoided, and long term financial planning is robust;
- Oversee and provide strategic guidance for strong financial performance; adhere to Board approved budget and operating plans; foster transparency and accountability;
- Explore opportunities for growth and new programs; negotiate productive partnerships and relationships that benefit Center clients and that advances the Center.

PROGRAMS

- Champion sustainable, high-quality programming while working to manage risks and liabilities that emerge during service delivery;
- Identify unmet needs, gaps in service and advocacy, especially by consulting Bill Wilson Center clients; continually upgrade programs by deliberately embracing experimentation and innovation in ways that also consider financial impact;

- Continue to foster a strong service orientation that is innovative, compassionate and professional; remain current with innovations in the field of service, ensuring that staff is trained in new approaches; share Bill Wilson Center’s ongoing thought leadership in the field.

FUNDRAISING AND MARKETING

- Function as the organization’s “Fundraiser-in-Chief” viewing all board, staff, programs, clients and partners through a fundraising lens; understand the actual and prospective funding communities for Bill Wilson Center; create strategies to secure sustained funding and engage staff and board members in solicitation activities;
- Personally drive fundraising solicitation, especially with major private, government and business donors; develop fundraising alliances; lead and direct all fundraising efforts; appeal to donors, creating special and donor cultivation events for Bill Wilson Center;
- Continually explore new and creative strategies to expand Bill Wilson Center’s revenue base; develop corporate sponsorships, and governmental & nonprofit partnerships.

TEAM DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

- Through use of a combination of team assessment, performance accountability instruments, satisfaction and feedback surveys, and staff and board focus groups, continually improve team cohesion, staff and board member retention, and productivity;
- Ensure that staff at all levels are focused on organizational priorities and big picture strategies;
- Manage, motivate and evaluate staff to ensure that they are well-suited to addressing Bill Wilson Center client challenges and opportunities; promote employee engagement by remaining attentive to staff concerns; provide opportunities for staff to develop new and better ideas, skills, workflows and service approaches; promote the Bill Wilson Center as a great and satisfying place to work and build a career centered in excellent service to diverse communities in need;
- Forge meaningful partnerships with government, nonprofit, business and community organizations and leaders; empower staff to be active ambassadors of the Center and its clients.

PUBLIC RELATIONS, COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY

- Drive visibility for Bill Wilson Center by serving as a credible, articulate and effective spokesperson, in person and in writing; ensure that Bill Wilson Center is recognized for its leadership and outcomes, including cost savings from reduced welfare and other social expenditures;
- Serve as a spokesperson and advocate for the Bill Wilson Center’s clients with governments regionally and in California; when appropriate, help influence government policy as it relates to funding for Bill Wilson Center and other programs supporting those transitioning to independence and housing security; develop and communicate information showing the positive impact of Bill Wilson Center programs;
- Actively cultivate positive relations with leading funding, political, social services, public policy, housing and youth and family care constituencies.

BOARD RELATIONS

- Engage Board members in advancing the Bill Wilson Center in various ways by contributing time, expertise or treasure; provide ongoing communication and timely updates to the Board on the state of the organization;

- With the Board Chair, coordinate the efforts of various Board committees and task forces; encourage Board members' involvement in Bill Wilson Center's full range of activities, including all fundraising (including: personal giving, and identifying, cultivating, soliciting and thanking individual, corporate, foundation and government funders);
- Help identify and recruit new Board members, whose talents, commitment, and fundraising abilities are congruent with the needs and mission of Bill Wilson Center.

QUALIFICATIONS and CHARACTERISTICS

The CEO will be an experienced leader possessing the following key qualifications and characteristics:

- A proven team-builder with a belief in and commitment to Bill Wilson Center clients, a deep familiarity with the challenges faced by those who are homeless or housing insecure, and strong involvement in supportive housing solutions and associated services.
- Proven senior-level managerial and operational experience, problem solving, and financial experience in the nonprofit sector; executive experience in similarly sized public or private sector organizations; experience with youth-serving organizations would be advantageous.
- Demonstrated ability to increase earned and contributed revenue in ways that align to an organization's mission; a track record attracting financial support from individuals, government sources, foundations and businesses.
- Outstanding oral and written communication skills, including excellent public speaking skills.
- Experience growing organizations and services through: mergers, partnerships, organic growth, new service development, etc.; the ability to develop productive relationships with government agencies, politicians, businesses, nonprofits, community leaders and advocates from a variety of communities.
- Decisive and resourceful, with the organizational sensitivity to gain the support and confidence of the Board and staff at all levels; leader who empowers the leadership team and holds them accountable; understands the subtleties of recruiting, motivating, directing and retaining a diverse group of personalities with different work styles.
- A leader that deeply values diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, and who embodies and has a strong track record implementing anti-racist, culturally-responsive organizational policies and practices;
- An individual with outstanding human qualities; one who is straightforward, shares information easily, listens as well as offers advice, and respects the abilities of others; someone who imparts trust and integrity, and guides others in a similar vein.
- The CEO must maintain a sense of humor and grace under pressure.

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