



CHANGING LIVES

New Friends Help St. Vincent's Boys Reach for More

To see how your support helps those we serve, including kids from Canal Family Support Services (shown above) who are enjoying an educational field trip to the Marin Headlands, like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, and check us out on your mobile device wherever you go! See page 2 for details.



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Things are looking up for the **St. Vincent's School for Boys** CYO basketball team. They're scoring twice as many points as they did at the beginning of the year, they're running the court with huge smiles on their faces and—this is key—they're dressed for success, with new shoes and jerseys screaming “EAGLES,” along with their names. How cool is that?

There's more. There are fans in the bleachers at St. Vincent's home games: the **Redwood High School** varsity boys' basketball players who have bonded with the less fortunate youngsters from the residential treatment home in San Rafael and become their friends. The EAGLES' self-esteem is flying high.

“This relationship between St. Vincent's and Redwood is bringing these kids a feeling of unity and family and love, that there is a community and compassion for them. It's a blessing,” said **Rich King**, recreation supervisor at St. Vincent's. The facility is operated by Catholic Charities CYO, serving boys seven to 17, many of whom struggle with emotional disturbances resulting from parental abuse and neglect.

How these two disparate teams came together, one from an institution that helps boys form emotional bonds and a sense of trust denied them in an abusive childhood, and another from privilege and opportunity, is a study in service.



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Steve Compagno, the veteran Redwood High coach, has for some time passed used equipment on to his friend King. He was at St. Vincent's gym delivering balls November 12 and noticed the youngsters' less-than-ideal equipment.

"I said to Rich, 'Do these kids have shoes?' and he said, 'Well, they have what they have,'" said Compagno. "I said to Rich, 'Do your guys have uniforms?' and he said, 'They're the same uniforms we've had since 1997,'" said Compagno.

"I told him I was putting in my Nike order for the Redwood team and I wanted shoe sizes for every kid on the St. Vincent's team," said Compagno.

That evening, Compagno told his players about his visit to St. Vincent's, that everyone deserves respect and opportunity, and that the team from the public school in Larkspur, one of the finest in one of the state's most affluent counties, would befriend and become mentors to a group of young people with far less.

"It was like someone sprayed Superglue all over us," said Compagno. "Our team became solidified."

On November 26, the teams came together, and each Redwood player handed a bag to each of the 13 players from the St. Vincent's eighth grade CYO team—a bag containing new shoes, socks, jerseys and more. The tally for the equipment was \$2,800, paid by anonymous benefactors. "That's the best \$2,800 that has ever been spent," said Compagno.

Since then, the Redwood players and coaches have shown up for St. Vincent's games, wildly cheering for a shot that falls, a steal, a nice move—anything well done—and the St. Vincent's kids sit behind the team bench at Redwood games, form tunnels through which the players pass to take the court and join in a ritual Compagno has long presided over with his teams: before every game, every practice, the team forms a circle, joins hands and says one word - "family."

The payoff is already evident. "I have a kid who said, 'I want to go to Redwood and play basketball,'" said King. "They often don't have those aspirations. That alone is a victory," said King, in his 21st year on the St. Vincent's staff. "How many other kids can elevate their thinking toward a higher goal?"

Compagno said his coaching philosophy is to make every player feel important, no matter his skill. He sees the St. Vincent's players in the same light. "The initial handshakes have turned into hugs," he said. "Everybody wants to feel like somebody cares about them."



Coaches Steve Compagno (L) and Rich King (R)

"It was like someone sprayed Superglue all over our team. We became solidified."

- Steve Compagno, Redwood High Coach

Kent Eagelson, Division Director of Youth Residential Services and Executive Director of St. Vincent's, said, "A lot of these kids don't have anybody rooting for them from their families, but here is a group that has kind of adopted them so it is a positive. It has raised their self-esteem, their positive outlook—and now they also have another activity to enjoy, which is to go to Redwood games. It's a double plus."

It is for **Oliver Madsen** as well. He's an 18-year-old Redwood senior from Kentfield, a captain and center on the basketball team. Said Madsen, "Giving things to people makes you feel good, especially younger people who are less fortunate than you. We all live in Marin. We all have very good lives, and, at least for me personally, it makes me very happy to see that there are people who are happy to give back to the community and will take time out of their lives to do something for somebody else."

"You are talking about young boys and trust and hope," said Compagno.

"That's what we are trying to give them," said King. "Hope."

To learn more about CCCYO's At-Risk Youth programs and how your financial contributions can keep these support systems strong, visit www.cccyo.org. ■

Get an Inside Peek - Join Our Online Community



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You can also follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/cccyoadsf for immediate updates on agency news and interesting articles related to the work we do. ■

“Giving Back” Reaps Tenfold Benefit

For **Mike and Mari Pautler**, giving is both a family affair and part of their everyday routine. Growing up Catholic, with a mother who was a devout Lutheran, Mike saw firsthand the power of a faith-based nonprofit and its call to serve those in need. It's why he and Mari have been supporting Catholic Charities for more than 30 years – first in St. Louis, where Mike grew up, and then in Denver, Hartford, and now here in the Bay Area. The Pautlers chose Catholic Charities CYO as a key part of their charitable portfolio after investigating the Bay Area's most effective nonprofit organizations.

“We want to help people in crisis and help people move out of being in need. Catholic Charities CYO does this in many ways, including early education – a proven route to success and self-sufficiency.”

Mike and Mari view giving back as a responsibility and an opportunity – “a way of giving back to others the many blessings that God has given us.” They raised their children, both of whom participated in CYO Athletics, to be philanthropic from a very young age by requiring that part of their allowance be given to a cause of their choice.

Their two children are grown now and the Pautlers are retired. “We want to give more time to others while continuing to provide financial support,” says Mike, who joined the Catholic Charities CYO board of directors last year. “We are in a position to make a difference and that is what gets us out of bed in the morning. Everything we do to give back is returned to us tenfold. During tough times, helping others has given our family so much strength and so many graces.” ■



Supporting One Another Strengthens Us All

As a child, I was vaguely aware that my father had lived through the Great Depression with a foster family on a farm in rural Michigan. Years later, as I pieced together further elements of his story, I learned that he had become a ward of the St. Vincent de Paul Society after my grandfather became disabled and could no longer provide for his family. Absent the social safety net that we take for granted today, the scourge of abject poverty in the 1920s quickly escalated into the legal definition of parental neglect. Under these circumstances, parents sometimes lost custody of their children in order to save them.

We have a much better developed child welfare system today. Unfortunately, children can still fall victim to neglect and abuse, and under the most severe circumstances, become wards of the state. Some of the most troubled of these youth are placed in our care at St. Vincent's School for Boys. Living in residence in a simulated family environment, the boys at St. Vincent's attend school, receive therapy and begin to learn to trust that the adults in their lives will take care of them.

It is against this backdrop that a basketball team from Redwood High School reached across the invisible barrier that separates individual from community and bonded with the St. Vincent's Boys CYO basketball team. This simple act of looking out for the needs of one another has helped both teams gain a greater appreciation for what it means to be one human family.

The boys at St. Vincent's have years of healing ahead of them as they continue on their path toward adulthood free of abuse and neglect. I know from personal experience that this is a cycle that can be broken. Please know that the work your support makes possible is making a difference and that together we are strengthening families, building community and reducing poverty, one person and one basketball team, at a time.

Sincerely and with gratitude,

Jeff Bialik
Executive Director



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San Francisco, San Mateo & Marin

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55th Annual Catholic Charities CYO Golf Day

Join Honorary CYO Golf Day Chairs Emeritus Former San Francisco 49er Bill Ring and Jim McCabe to raise vital funds to give kids in need the chance to have a healthy and active summer experience at CYO Camp.

See registration and sponsorship details at www.cccyo.org/golfday

SAVE THE DATE
Monday, May 5, 2014
Stanford University Golf Course



CATHOLIC CHARITIES CYO