

# STATEMENT OF INTENT 2025-26

## We Make A Way

We build community to make a way forward for everyone.

For too many of our young people, there appears to be no way. No way to graduate. No way to find school clothes. No way to get to practice. No way to make new friends after moving. Even small obstacles appear insurmountable... no one to help with math homework, no one to help find pet food, and no way to find someone who cares. For too many of our families, the same is true. No way that school will understand. No way to pay for medical care. No way to find stable housing.

Mere optimism buckles under these challenges. Temporary relief, brief escape, and better coping skills ask people to suffer and endure; they do not cure. We press against a system settled into place that works for most people most of the time. We must reckon with the notion that people who are advantaged have no urgency to disrupt a system that works for them nor incentive to risk loss or limitations they fear change may bring. But the people with better chances and the people with greater obstacles share the same villages, towns, and schools across our county.

The impacts of trauma, the challenges of mental health, the limitations of poverty, and the complications of addiction are all very real. We need more than optimism and coping strategies. Our goal is to generate real hope that comes from connection and capacity provided through determined community. We believe everyone is better when all are well. We believe there is a path for wellness, success, and economic mobility for us all. No one needs to have less so that others can have more. We generate value through community replacing a fear of scarcity with an assurance of plentiful resources. We make a way forward for everyone.

We build connections through mentoring, internships, restorative practices, recreation, and family events, knowing that relationships, empathy, and trust are catalysts for transformation. Building our collective will through interconnectedness, we open pathways and install capacity that creates chances for everyone. Best practices supported by research, training from national experts, and a culture of learning from one another overlays our current experience with new maps of understanding. We explore dissonant experiences through sustained dialogue. We activate the capacity of our families and our young people who *“are not illnesses to be treated, but muscle to be flexed<sup>[1]</sup>”* to remove barriers. We plan for success with families and youth. This hard work brings a visible reward of a more hopeful society, more resourced community, more engaged families and more healthy, capable and connected individuals.

We expect exhaustion and frustration. To extend hope, we must experience strain and strife alongside those who are struggling in our community; renewal and rest are necessary for us. We gain restoration best when we ourselves rely upon the strength of community. We do not just care for ourselves, we care for one another. And we are not left to fend for ourselves, we are cared for by others. The hope and security we work to extend to every individual, especially our young people, is that our community will come together to make a way for all of us to thrive.

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*“The essential features of successful place-based work are intentionality, relationships, and dialogue. Nothing meaningful happens on accident; sustaining work requires relationships, and continual improvement requires meaningful conversations with everyone involved.” - Annie Bogenschutz*

[1] Dr. Hayin Kimner- California Learning Exchange