



People Reaching Out

embracing teens and their families with counseling

Five years ago, Kathy Green was a staff of one as she provided counseling services to struggling teens and their families as part of **People Reaching Out**, a United Way certified partner agency.

Today, as director of counseling and support services, Green oversees a staff of 20 that includes four counselors who are fluent in Russian, one who speaks Hmong and one who is bilingual in Spanish. The department is the nonprofit's fastest growing division.

"We're growing and helping more and more people of cross-cultural communities at a time when a lot of counseling agencies are shrinking because of loss of funding," Green said.

People Reaching Out's free counseling services are provided to families who have a teen struggling with mental, emotional and behavioral issues. To support the family as a unit, the program may assign a family therapist, an individual therapist for each teen and a couple's therapist for the parents. Each family member receives the service they need, but by working together in a family system, the issues are addressed simultaneously on an individual and family basis.

People Reaching Out was formed in 1981 to address youth substance abuse and violence and now focuses on prevention by empowering youth to make healthy choices, strengthening families to guide teens away from drugs and violence, and forming partnerships to build a strong community. Since its inception, People Reaching Out has continued to develop and implement programs based on state-of-the-art prevention, research and intervention strategies in response to emerging needs. The group serves approximately 24,000 youth and families each year.

People Reaching Out's counseling offices are located on the campus of California College, Career & Technical Education Center. Counselors are also assigned to West Sacramento's Yolo High School and River City High School and provide additional services throughout Sacramento County and Woodland.

Oksana Tyulyu, a school onsite counselor with People Reaching Out, created a warmly lit corner in her office to provide a safe space for teens to come in and talk to her. The most important factor to Tyulyu is that they feel safe.

"It's amazing the difference it makes when they're in a safe environment," Tyulyu said. "The teens actually want me to check in with them and they want an older person to talk to. It's rewarding that they feel they can open up to me."

Green, who used to serve as a school onsite counselor, agrees.

"It's been exciting to see People Reaching Out grow and get more referrals in because that means more people are getting the help they need," Green said.

10389 Old Placerville Road · Sacramento, CA 95827-2506
tel 916-368-3000 · fax 916-368-3029
www.yourlocalunitedway.org