

**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD  
TRANSITIONAL AGE YOUTH (TAY) COMMITTEE  
MINUTES ■ Thursday, May 25, 2017**

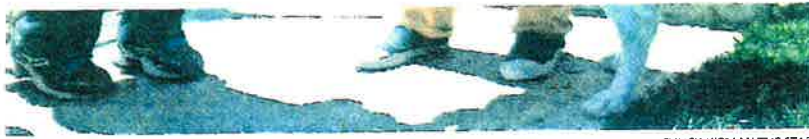
<p><b>Board Members Present</b>          Cmdr. Ron Nelson, Chair          Josh Lepore, Casa Pacifica          David Vahidi, CFS          Monica Vergara, Interface          Javier Bautista, TAY Tunnel          Christine Navarro, Telecare          Michelle Zaragoza, NYU (PCORI Project)</p>	<p><b>VCBH Staff Present</b>          Pam Roach, Transformational Liaison          Greg Bergan, MHSA          Edith Pham, BHAB Assistant</p> <p><b>NEXT MEETING:</b>  <b>Thursday, June 22, 2017, 10:30 – 12:00 p.m.</b></p> <p>Ventura County Behavioral Health          1911 Williams Drive, Training Room (first floor), Oxnard</p>
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Note: The committee has not yet approved these minutes. There may be additions/deletions or corrections before the minutes are accepted in final form.

	DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS/ ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE
I.	<b>Call to Order</b> Chair Cmdr. Ron Nelson called the meeting to order at 10:35.		
II.	<b>Approval of the Agenda</b> Cmdr. Nelson asked the Committee to review and approve today's agenda.	The agenda was approved as written. <b>M/S/C</b>	
III.	<b>Approval of the Minutes</b> Cmdr. Nelson asked the committee to review and approve the minutes of the April 27, 2017 meeting.	The minutes were approved as written. <b>M/S/C</b>	
IV.	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b> Cmdr. Nelson welcomed everyone and asked for introductions.		
V.	<b>Chair Announcements</b> A. The NAMI Walk was held on May 6 <sup>th</sup> . It was successful thanks to the many participants. B. Cmdr. Nelson thanked the TAY Tunnel for opening their doors to a group of BHAB members as they conducted a site visit recently. A report on this site visit will be presented at the June 19 <sup>th</sup> BHAB General Meeting. C. Cmdr. Nelson has toured two Aegis Treatment Centers facilities: one in Ventura and one in Simi Valley during their open house on May 24 <sup>th</sup> . D. The committee will need to prepare its annual report. To that effect, Cmdr. Nelson asked that everyone send him and Edith Pham their lists of proposed goals for 2017-18 and what they see as challenges facing the TAY population. This will be discussed at the June meeting. E. Cmdr. Nelson asked the committee about going dark in August, as happened the previous year. After a brief discussion, all agreed.	Send proposed goals and challenges to Cmdr. Nelson and E. Pham  Go dark in August	All
VI.	<b>Public Comments</b> None.		
VII.	<b>Presentation: Committee Members Discuss Upcoming Committee Programs</b> Cmdr. Nelson opened a discussion on what the committee perceives as gaps in services for the TAY population. A. Javier Bautista invited all to attend a meeting at the TAY Tunnel on June 1 <sup>st</sup> regarding Gaps in the Spectrum of Services for TAY. Cmdr. Nelson asked him to bring back to this committee the ideas discussed during that meeting.		

	<p>B. Cmdr. Nelson noted that on June 1<sup>st</sup> the District Attorney's office will present a three-hour training called Understanding Legal Marijuana, focusing on the implementation of Proposition 64.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mr. Bautista noted that many youth at the TAY Tunnel have been picking up the VCBH cards that present information on marijuana.</li> <li>2. Josh Lepore noted that marijuana will be a significant issue for housing providers. It should be viewed from many perspectives: youth, providers, law enforcement, mental health. Mr. Lepore would like to see a panel presentation that would include all these perspectives. Mr. Lepore noted that in Casa Pacifica's housing program some TAY living on campus are in recovery, while some might have a marijuana card. This raises new issues.</li> <li>3. Christina Navarro noted that Telecare is asking young adults who have a marijuana card to not bring the drug on campus. Another concern is that the Casas campus has to go smoke-free to comply with a county ordinance. Turning Point, Anka Behavioral Health and Telecare operate on campus and are discussing how to implement this change. Cmdr. Nelson will request a presentation from Alcohol and Drug Program (ADP) regarding marijuana.</li> </ol> <p>C. Josh Lepore noted that homelessness is a serious problem for TAY. A task force, the Youth Collaborative, meets regularly to discuss this. It is headed by staff from the County Chief Administrative Officer (CEO)'s office. Sober living facilities for TAY would fill a gap as TAY often do not fit with the adults in recovery in the current sober living facilities. Monica Vergara supported the suggestion.</p> <p>D. Mr. Lepore noted the lack of transitional housing for youth as they turn 18.</p>		
VIII.	<p><b>VCBH Transitions Update – Sevet Johnson</b></p> <p>A. Ms. Johnson was not in attendance.</p>		
IX.	<p><b>VCBH Alcohol &amp; Drug Program Update – Anna Flores</b></p> <p>A. Ms. Flores was not in attendance.</p>		
X.	<p><b>Providers Update</b></p> <p>A. Mr. Bautista noted that the TAY Tunnel has been doing outreach at the Juvenile Hall and the Todd Road Jail. Additionally, staff is working on building bridges with Vista del Mar Hospital and Hillmont Psychiatric Center.</p> <p>B. Mr. Bautista noted that all bathrooms at the TAY Tunnel are now gender-neutral. Next month, all staff will be trained in CPR.</p> <p>C. Cristina Navarro reported that Ventura Early Intervention Prevention Services (VIPS) recently lost its administrator, Barry Boatman, who passed away suddenly and unexpectedly. The expansion of the VIPS program came to a halt due to budget cuts.</p> <p>D. Mr. Lepore stated that Casa Pacifica is increasing the number of TAY it serves. It is receiving more referrals as youth are graduating from high schools. It serves about 38 non-minor dependents and provides independent living skill building with adolescents ages 15 to 18.</p>		
XI.	<p><b>Committee Members' Comments/Activities</b></p> <p>A. Michelle Zaragoza of New York University (NYU) introduced herself. She is gathering information for the Patient Centered Outcome Research Institute (PCORI). She is also reaching out to all involved with mental health and the justice system as the two intersect.</p> <p>B. Mr. Lepore noted that Casa Pacifica will hold an event for foster youth who are reaching a milestone. It will be held on June 17<sup>th</sup> at Channel Islands. At that time scholarships will be awarded.</p>		

	<p>Casa Pacifica will hold a barbeque party on July 19<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. All past and current TAY are invited.</p> <p>C. Pam Roach congratulated Cmdr. Nelson on a 5/22/17 Star article regarding a dog program at the Todd Road jail. Cmdr. Nelson explained that the program, called RUFF Road or Rehabilitation Utilizing Furry Friends, pairs rescue dogs with selected inmates who socialize them prior to their adoption into forever homes. The program, which started recently, has already had a positive impact on inmates and staff.</p>		
XII.	<p><b>Items for Next Meeting Agenda</b> Request a presentation on marijuana.</p>	Contact ADP	E Pham
XIII.	<p><b>Adjourn</b> The meeting adjourned at 11:20.</p>		



CHUCK KIRMAN/THE STAR

Denise De'Garmo-Ritchie, co-founder of Pivot, Promoting Change Through the Animal-Human Bond, visits with inmate Whitney Byrd and Chance, an Alaskan husky mix, at the Todd Road Jail.

# Prisoners discover salvation in dogs

## 9 inmates at Todd Road Jail picked for RUFF

JOHN SCHEIBE  
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It took a stay in Ventura County jail for Whitney Byrd to get the chance to do something she's wanted to do since she was a kid, work with dogs. "It's been awesome," Byrd said as she stood in a fenced-in yard at the Todd Road Jail with Chance, a 1-year-old husky-shepherd mix by her side.

Chance is one of five dogs transferred from the county-run Camarillo animal shelter to the Todd Road Jail in February by the nonprofit Pivot Animal Rescue & Educational Outreach.

The organization got its start in 2015 when one of its founders, Denise De'Garmo-Ritchie, was working at a Santa Paula animal shelter. While there, a dog reached out with his paw to a

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## RUFF

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shy girl, giving her the confidence to read a story to him with more confidence.

De'Garmo-Ritchie told the 8-year-old girl she was doing a great job reading to Bo.

"She looked up at me and said, 'That's because I know Bo won't get mad at me,'" De'Garmo-Ritchie recalled. De'Garmo-Ritchie shared the story with a friend, Kathy Quijada. The two soon decided to start Pivot to save unwanted dogs by pairing them with at-risk people.

By caring for and training the dogs, these people, some of them jail inmates, also learn important skills, including patience, compassion and responsibility, Quijada said. And the dogs, who would otherwise be sitting in a kennel at the animal shelter, get a chance to be adopted into a new home after graduating from the program where they learn obedience and other skills.

As Pivot stated in an online video, "One prisoner becomes the salvation of the other."

Working with Chance "has been a blessing for me," Byrd said.

"He's helped me grow as a person," in part by showing her unconditional loyalty and love, she said.

Byrd is one of nine inmates at the Todd Road Jail selected to participate in the dog-training program, which goes by the acronym RUFF Road or Rehabilitation Utilizing Furry Friends.

Organizers hope that once the dogs graduate from the 16-week obedience training program, families will be willing to adopt them, giving them what organizers call "a forever home." Graduation from the program is scheduled for around June 20.

Byrd and other inmates are not only training the dogs but also helping to decide what homes the dogs will go to after graduation.

When asked how she will feel about saying goodbye to Chance, Byrd said, "It will be almost impossible to see him go. It will be very sad."

As with other Todd Road inmates in the program, Byrd said Chance and other dogs are like children.

"They learn to trust you and bond with



CHUCK KIRMAN/THE STAR

Inmates Stephen Rodriguez sits with Buddy as Curtis Godfrey, from left, Ernesto Guevara and Alex Carrera participate in the Pivot program at the Todd Road Jail. The program helps inmates and dogs.

you," she said.

Inmate Jennifer Kwiatkowski, 35, said being in the program "has given me a purpose to wake up in the morning.

"It gives you integrity and teaches you to respect not only yourself but other inmates and deputies," she said.

Kwiatkowski, Byrd and others also say the dogs have a big calming effect on inmates and jail staff.

Ron Nelson, commander of the Todd Road Jail, agreed, saying he's researched similar dog/inmate programs at other jails and heard much the same thing.

"They really do have a beneficial effect," Nelson said.

As with other programs pairing dogs with inmates, officials in Ventura County hope this one will give inmates the chance to live a crime-free life once they're released.

"The inmate gains patience, confidence, self-pride, communication and job skills,"

sheriff's officials said earlier this year in announcing the RUFF Road program.

Those skills include working as a pet groomer or numerous other jobs, Quijada said.

Quijada's nonprofit has also taken dogs to Juvenile Hall where they've been paired with inmates there.

None of the money used to pay the program comes from public, tax-payer funds, De'Garmo-Ritchie said.

"We depend entirely on donations," she said of the program, which she said has the potential to do a lot of good.

To illustrate her point, De'Garmo-Ritchie referred to Pivot's website where it states: "The unconditional love of an animal is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

To learn more or to donate to Pivot, visit [www.pivotareo.org](http://www.pivotareo.org).