

Marin Independent Journal

Tuesday, July 10, 2018 \$1.50 FACEBOOK.COM/MARINIJFAN TWITTER.COM/MARINIJ

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A7 OPINION

Readers' Forum

AHO helps young people at only a small cost

A Marin IJ article of June 24 addressed the extraordinary cost to Marin taxpayers for Juvenile Hall.

In my opinion, it is important that the IJ also run an article about Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity, a successful, cost-effective, community-based program for Marin's homeless teens and young adults ages 16 to 25.

AHO with a staff of one — along with many volunteers — offers all the resources these young people need to become contributing adults and future leaders, at a cost of \$5.48 per day for one youth. Compare that with the cost of \$759 per day for one youth in juvenile services with a full-time staff of 21, plus part-time employees.

What is remarkable about AHO is that there are over 2,000 young people who have been recipients of the personalized, comprehensive, youth-led safety net and are now college graduates, have their own families, meaningful professional careers and continue to "give back" for the help they received from AHO by volunteering for AHO's Youth Team projects.

The entire annual budget of the AHO program is \$230,000 and is made up of private donors, grants and in-kind pro bono professional medical, dental and mental health services, as compared with the \$4 million annual Juvenile Hall budget.

The Tiburon-Belvedere Rotary Club and many other Marin Rotary clubs and caring and concerned Marinites are proud to support this program that is helping the most vulnerable, struggling homeless young people in our community to avoid becoming homeless adults.

— George Landau, Tiburon

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