ANNUAL **IMPACT** REPORT

July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026



free to be.

Free to Be builds confidence in Sonoma County youth, empowering them to make healthy choices in today's ever-changing culture.

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Growing with purpose

Hello Friends of Free to Be,

This year, Free to Be became more than a program with growing reach. Together, we became a stronger, more connected countywide community for youth.

We strengthened our staff and board, improved organizational systems, expanded donor visibility, launched legacy giving, and deepened our evaluation work. By prioritizing internal growth over rapid expansion, we built a stronger foundation for lasting impact.

Now, we are building on that foundation. In 2026–2027, we will focus on diversifying revenue, expanding staff and volunteer capacity to meet growing demand, and strengthening the Teen Innovator Program. Video storytelling will support fundraising, recruitment, and engagement, while our new shared nonprofit space will encourage collaboration, camaraderie, and responsible use of resources.

The need is enormous, and school budgets cannot keep pace with demand. But we believe deeply in what is possible when a community comes together for its young people. Together, we will continue working upstream to build healthier, stronger futures.
I am so grateful for our incredible Free to Be community!

Leslie Bisbee Jordan
Chief Executive Officer



COUNTYWIDE REACH

A stronger foundation and a wider footprint.

Free to Be strengthened its people, funding, and results while expanding access across Sonoma County. From Cloverdale to Petaluma and Two Rock, Free to Be showed up in classrooms and community spaces with confidence-building tools, youth leadership, and practical support.

2025–2026 AT A GLANCE		
Free to Be Workshops		
2,242 students reached	85 classrooms visited	175 classroom touches
19 schools served	11 school districts	75% of revenue to programs
+19% growth in schools served		
+8% growth in classrooms reached		

Student totals varied with school schedules and class size, while Free to Be's footprint grew from 16 to 19 schools and from 79 to 85 classrooms.

Pilot post-program findings show meaningful growth in kindness, confidence, empathy, peer advocacy, inclusion, and conflict resolution.

My Life® Classroom Workshop Impact Report

Free to Be Program Outcomes

Post-program findings show measurable growth in kindness, confidence, empathy, peer advocacy, and inclusion.

KEY RESULTS

78% — Workshop Worth
Students said workshops were worth their time, showing strong engagement and perceived value.

100% — More Kindness & Empathy
100% of teachers agreed students are showing more kindness and empathy toward each other.

67% — Greater Inclusion
67% of teachers observed students including others more often in games, group work, or conversations.

88% — Choose Kindness
Students said they were likely to choose kindness or stand up for someone being bullied after the sessions.

100% — Stand Up for Peers
100% of teachers agreed students are more willing to stand up for peers who are being teased or bullied.

67% — Improved Conflict Resolution
67% of teachers observed students solving small disagreements more respectfully.

Pillars of Meaningful Growth

Empathy & Relationships
Students described becoming better friends and more understanding of others' worries and struggles.

Self-Awareness & Courage
Students showed growth in confidence, self-awareness, knowing right from wrong, and comfort saying when something is not okay.

Student Voice



"I have realized I am able to identify great qualities within myself."

"I am able to make somebody feel better when they are sad."

"I am better at noticing when someone does not look like they are doing great but is trying to mask it."

"I have realized that I matter."

Teacher Voice

"I have noticed them having more knowledge and correct language to use when problems arise."

"I think there has been a bit more understanding of students who maybe don't have the same interests as themselves, whereas before it came off more judgmental."

"I have noticed more inclusion."

Student-Reported Benefits

- ✚ Standing up for others felt significantly easier.
- ✚ Better active listening in social settings.
- ✚ Greater awareness of peer emotions and feelings.
- ✚ Improved friendships and daily social interactions.

Source
Free to Be Program Outcomes: Post Findings & Evidence of Improvement, post-program student and teacher survey findings.

Note: These results are based on a pilot sample of three classrooms and are being expanded during the 2026 school year to include approximately 80% of students served through Free to Be programming.

YOUTH LED IMPACT

Teen Innovators: building futures		
Peer voices create a different kind of connection. Teen Innovators bring lived experience into classrooms while building their own confidence, leadership, empathy, and purpose.		
24 **Teen Innovators involved**	**12** **Teen Innovators graduated**	**8** **Teen Innovator events**

"My generation knows what it is like to be on social media—we don't know any different." — **Reese**, age 17, Teen Innovator

"Free to Be has made me a lot more confident and taught me how to treat others—and how to help when they are struggling." — **Delaney**, age 16, Teen Innovator

A parent's perspective

"Being a Free to Be Teen Innovator shaped Kaylin's life in numerous ways. She developed a passion for working with youth, saw how her actions improved the lives of others, and carried her training into her work with children. Most importantly, Free to Be gave her direction. She chose to study Cognitive and Behavioral Neuroscience and hopes to become a pediatric neurologist. I will forever be grateful for the impact Free to Be has made on Kaylin's life." — **Kelly Suacci**, parent of a Teen Innovator

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BEYOND THE NUMBERS

A year of meaningful moments

Partnerships and youth-created opportunities brought the mission to life throughout the year.

Youth suicide prevention. With Sonoma County's youth suicide rate at 12.4 per 100,000—compared with 8.9 statewide—we are grateful to offer Youth Mental Health First Aid for adults and Teen Mental Health First Aid for young people.

SCOE Title I grant. We thank the Sonoma County Office of Education for investing in Free to Be programming for five fifth-grade Title I classrooms. Their support affirms the value of our work and helps bring it to students who need it most.

BLOOM Girls Retreat. Teen Innovators Reese Gorman and Kaylin Suacci created and led a retreat for sixth- through eighth-grade girls centered on confidence, kindness, connection, and belonging. We are so proud of their leadership.

Pony Express leadership. Thanks to Linda's generous gift, our Teen Innovators learned communication, empathy, presence, confidence, and trust through experiential work with horses.

Districtwide access. We are grateful to the Imboden family, whose sponsorship made 58 sessions possible for more than 600 fifth- and sixth-grade students throughout RVUSD.

"Watching the students open up, engage, and learn practical ways to navigate real-life challenges made it clear how impactful this program is. The added presence of high school mentors creates a powerful connection that truly resonates." — **Steve and Leslie Imboden**

Source: California Department of Public Health youth suicide data, 2021–2023.



LEADERSHIP

More voices at the table

Free to Be significantly expanded its Board of Directors, bringing together 11 leaders whose experience strengthens governance, community connection, education, health, finance, and sustainable growth.



Erika Copenhaver, Chair
Attorney, Galanti & Copenhaver



Katherine Gallagher, Secretary
Executive Director, GoStrategic



Gordon Dow
CTO and Founder, Dow Pharmaceutical Sciences



Sandy Bader
Former Teacher, Cardinal Newman High School



Lauren Thompson
Realtor, Corcoran Icon Properties



Sue Bisbee
Founder, Free to Be



Brian Reed, Vice Chair
President and CEO, Summit State Bank



Toni Sprouse, Treasurer
Financial Advisor and Senior Portfolio Manager, Morgan Stanley



Daniel M. Gonzalez, MD, MPH
Redwood Orthopaedic Surgery Associates



Monique Luke
Director of Community Coalitions
Sonoma County Office of Education



Britni Pimental, LMFT, PsyD
Organizational Psychologist and Consultant

COUNTYWIDE COLLABORATION

Our CEO represents Free to Be in countywide roundtables where agencies, educators, nonprofits, and community leaders work together on prevention, policy, safety, belonging, and youth well-being.

Violence Prevention Partnership VPP
Advancing coordinated strategies that strengthen safety, connection, and belonging.

Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council JJCC
Bringing prevention, early support, and youth-centered perspectives into countywide planning.

Youth Crisis Action Coalition YCAC
Supports county-wide systematic changes to improve youth mental health.

Our CEO's feature in The Press Democrat's Women in Conversation coverage and a growing schedule of speaking engagements further expanded the mission's visibility.



Women in Conversation
The Press Democrat

Presenting and Founding Partner
SUMMIT STATE BANK
Member FDIC

Honoring Women Shaping the North Bay: Leslie Bisbee Jordan

"Leadership isn't about having all the answers ... My role has simply been to listen, bring people together around a common purpose, and keep saying yes to what matters. Community has always been the answer."

Please join us on September 23rd for our Women in Conversation event featuring Anne Lamott.

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A BOLD NEXT CHAPTER

In 2026–2027, we will strengthen the support around our programs so that more young people can benefit—without losing the quality, trust, and personal connection at the heart of Free to Be.

Build lasting community support. We will broaden our funding through legacy giving, school and business partnerships, and multi-year commitments so that limited school budgets never prevent students from receiving our support.

Grow our capacity to respond. By strengthening our staff, training volunteer presenters, and expanding Mental Health First Aid, we can reach more classrooms while continuing to deliver programs with care and consistency.

Invest in teen leadership. We will welcome and engage 20 Teen Innovators, create a clear pathway from recruitment through graduation, involve families, and give teens more opportunities to lead and connect with younger students.



free to be.

Thank you to our students, Teen Innovators, educators, school partners, volunteers, donors, sponsors, board members, staff, and community collaborators.
Together, we are building confidence, connection, and futures across Sonoma County.

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