

# THE CROSSWINDS - OPEN TABLE COLLABORATION:

## *An Aftercare Model for Runaway and Homeless Youth*



BY BYRON R. JOHNSON AND WILLIAM WUBBENHORST



# Purpose

ISR exists to initiate, support, and conduct research on religion, involving scholars and projects spanning the intellectual spectrum: history, psychology, sociology, economics, anthropology, political science, epidemiology, theology, and religious studies. Our mandate extends to all religions, everywhere, and throughout history. It also embraces the study of religious effects on such things as prosocial behavior, family life, population health, economic development, and social conflict. While always striving for appropriate scientific objectivity, our scholars treat religion with the respect that sacred matters require and deserve.



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PROGRAM ON PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR



# THE CROSSWINDS: OPEN TABLE COLLABORATION

## AN AFTERCARE MODEL FOR RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH

BACKGROUND . . . . .	4
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	5
OPEN TABLE . . . . .	7
UNDERSTANDING THE OUTCOMES OF THE ST. JOHN'S/CROSSWINDS	
OPEN TABLE DEMONSTRATION . . . . .	15
MAPPING SOCIAL CAPITAL . . . . .	18
OPEN TABLE GOING FORWARD . . . . .	19
THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL, OPEN TABLE AND THE RUNAWAY AND	
HOMELESS YOUTH ADMINISTRATION . . . . .	21
CONCLUSION . . . . .	22
EXHIBIT 1: OPEN TABLE SOCIAL CAPITAL MAPPING:	
ANNUAL SUMMARY ACTIVITY FORM . . . . .	24

## BACKGROUND

Based on a study entitled “Voices of Youth Count,”<sup>1</sup> conducted by Chapin-Hall in 2016, an estimated 1 in 10 young adults ages 18-25 experienced a form of homelessness over a 12-month period. Between the ages 13 to 17, the estimate is 1 in 30. About half of those estimated 3.5 million young adults were explicitly homeless (i.e., no place to sleep), while the other half involved couch surfing<sup>2</sup> only. One of the programs for addressing these needs is the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA), which provides grants to community-based organizations across the country to: i) conduct street outreach; ii) provide emergency shelter and family reunification for youth under the age of 18; and iii) provide up to 18 months of transitional housing to youth between the ages of 16 and 22. The main focus for the latter programs, referred to as Transitional Living Programs (TLPs), is to provide this transitional housing that leads to a safe return to the community, equipped with the housing and employment needed to achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency.

Beginning around 2017, RHYA leadership became increasingly focused on the relational supports that runaway and homeless youth needed for long-term success, and in the process became familiar with an organization called Open Table. Open Table, a nonprofit training organization founded in 2007 for developing and directing relational support where trained volunteers come alongside a family or individual in need, called “Friends.” By giving of themselves relationally, Table Members invest in the lives of Friends. Table Members commit to meeting once a week for a year with their Friend, providing support by helping them develop and implement their own plan, with the Table Members ‘tapping into’ their own social networks in support of that plan. Open Table works closely with the social services system to collaborate with, and complement, these and other community-based services.

Jon Katov, CEO and founder of Open Table, presented a workshop at the RHYA national conference in November of 2018, garnering significant interest among grantees that were likewise concerned with relational supports for youth they served, and particularly those served through the TLP. Katov and Open Table were subsequently enlisted as subject matter experts for helping interested grantees in developing stronger ties to their surrounding communities through the development of these relational supports. RHYA, for its part, supported these efforts through a special supplemental funding opportunity to TLP grantees to assist in these efforts.

<sup>1</sup> By adopting and improving on best practices for counting homeless youth, Voices of Youth Count developed and consistently applied a youth-centered count methodology across 22 partner communities during the summer of 2016. VoYC Youth Counts enumerated homeless and unstably housed youth between the ages of 13 and 25 years old. Current and formerly homeless youth were employed to plan and conduct the count, ensuring their insights were brought to bear on the strategy that VoYC used to enumerate youth on the day and night of the count. This study was funded through earmarked funds to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

<sup>2</sup> Defined as staying temporarily in a series of other people's homes, typically making use of improvised sleeping arrangements.

## INTRODUCTION

This case study examines an innovative partnership consisting of a community-based program funded by RHY in Cocoa Beach, Florida, named Crosswinds Youth Services (CYS), and a group of volunteers from a nearby parish, St. John the Evangelist Catholic Community. St. John had already licensed the Open Table model to serve in its community prior to its relationship with CYS. CYS was one of five recipients of the aforementioned supplemental grants, although they had already started down this path, having included Open Table in its most recent TLP grant that they won. The Crosswinds-St. John's collaboration entails the matching of youth residing at CYS' Transitional Living Program (TLP) with a group of volunteers, referred to as Table Members, to serve as a relational support system to help the youth develop and implement a life plan for successfully transitioning from the TLP towards safe and stable housing, education and/or employment, and economic independence.

CYS and St. John's were connected via an organization called Open Table, a unique mutual support model trained in 28 states, whereby trained volunteers (Table Members) come alongside an individual, referred to as a Friend, in a deliberately relationship-based approach that builds around, and responds to, the Friend's desires and aspirations regarding education, career, and life in general. Table Members are asked to formally commit to meeting with the Friend on a weekly basis for a year. This approach has attracted a total of 3,949 volunteer participants through Tables that served 418 individuals and families in 29 states and districts across the United States, between 2014-2019.

The purpose of this Case Study is four-fold:

1. To tell the story of the development of the St. Johns Open Table program, and its integration with the Crosswinds Transitional Living Program.
2. To examine the challenges and breakthroughs encountered in this process, including the 'culture clash' between a community-based human services program and this newly formed, volunteer-based relational support system. The growing pains associated with this demonstration project not only led to profound impacts on the Youth/Friend served, but also triggered a significant programmatic shift and culture change within the Crosswinds organization.
3. To conduct a social capital mapping sample exercise for one of the youth served through the Crosswinds-Saint John's Open Table collaboration to provide both a qualitative and quantitative measurement of the social capital leveraged on behalf of this youth transitioning out of transitional housing.
4. To describe and discuss an emerging model for developing an Open Table resource alongside a RHY Transitional Living Program, based on the new protocols and processes adopted by Crosswinds, and improving the capacity and skills of youth served through the TLP in their transition back into the community.







## The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

In 1974, Congress first passed what is now known as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) to support community-based organizations in the care of young people who live on the streets or apart from a safe and stable home. The RHY program is located within the Administration for Children and Families within the US Department of Health and Human Services. RHY funds programs through three different grant areas:

- **Street Outreach:** RHY funds street-based services to runaway, homeless, and street youth, who have been subject to, or are at risk of being subjected to sexual abuse, human trafficking, or sexual exploitation.
- **Basic Center Program:** RHY funds community-based organizations to provide outreach, crisis intervention, emergency shelter, family reunification and aftercare services to runaway and homeless youth under the age of 18 and their families.
- **Transitional Living Program (TLP)/ Maternity Group Homes (MGH):** RHY funds community-based, adult-supervised group homes for youth ages 16 to 22 who cannot safely live with their own families. MGH programs are specifically designed to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting youth.

### Crosswinds

One of RHY's long-time grantees<sup>3</sup> is Crosswinds Youth Services (CYS), which began in the 1970s with a group of concerned community leaders who came together to discuss how Brevard County, Florida (the county where Crosswinds is located) could respond to the increasing number of runaway and homeless youth in the community.

## OPEN TABLE

### How Open Table Works

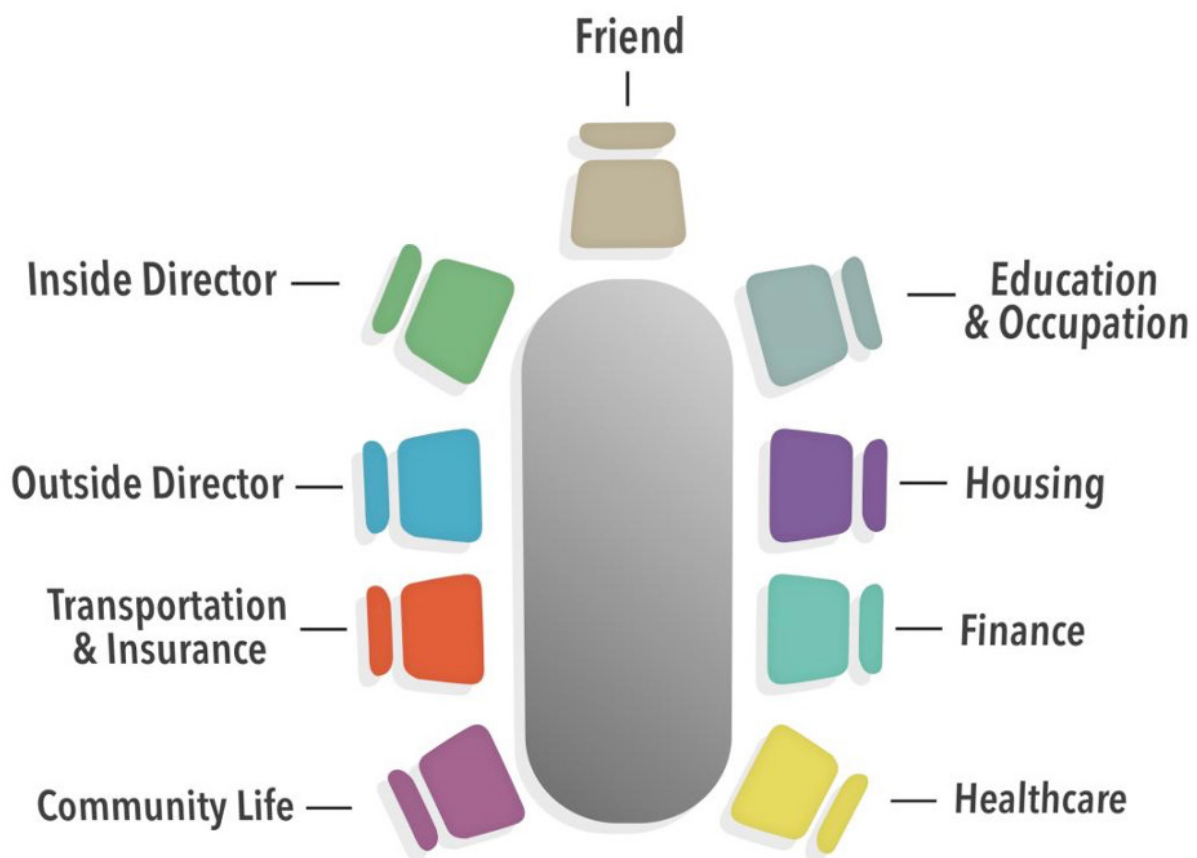
In the Open Table model, through a Table, individuals are trained to use their relational capital and social networks (Open Table has named them Relational Assets™) to positively impact the social determinants of health for an individual or family. The activities of the Table centers around a life plan, defined by the Table's Friend (i.e., the individual or family served by a Table), which outlines goals specific to the Friend and their family. Each Table is hosted by an organization that licenses the Open Table model. The team of volunteers forming a Table (Table Members) vary in size from 6-8 when serving an individual, to 10-12 Table Members when serving a family. Open Table provides 15-20 hours of webinar-based and on-line training for Table Members to adequately communicate the Open Table Theory of Change as well as how to support Friends as they develop their own goals and plan. Each Table Member

<sup>3</sup> RHY Street Outreach, Basic Center, and Transitional Living Programs are typically awarded as three-year grants.

is generally assigned a particular area of responsibility, as shown in Figure 1 below.

These assignments do not necessarily require that the Table Member has an expertise in that area (e.g., healthcare, finance, housing, etc.), but is simply willing to seek out and access the networks of other people, resources and information to support their Friend's life plan. Notwithstanding the training and preparation, the path of each Table will vary according to how the Friend chooses to utilize their Table.

## OPEN TABLE MODEL



Open Table describes itself as a community-based developer and training organization of models and processes that support solutions to social challenges. While the model was originally developed through churches, it has expanded to an array of community sectors introduced to the model, which grew into a broader vision of community co-investment of relational and social capital. These include business, healthcare, government, education and others. Through this expansion and growth, Open Table became not just an exemplar, but a shared purpose movement with a broad constellation of diverse people and community sectors, that focuses on the investment of relational



and social capital to overcome barriers. In this way, Open Table operates in a manner contrary to the fragmented, transactional approaches that far too often characterize much of contemporary social service delivery. Open Table was recently the subject of a case study evaluation by Baylor University's Program on Prosocial Behavior<sup>4</sup>.

### Crosswinds and Open Table

Jon Katov, founder and CEO of Open Table made a presentation of their relationship-centric model of relational supports to Karen Locke, Chief Operating Officer for CYS, and some of her front-line staff in January of 2018.

Locke described CYS' initial interest in this new strategy for engaging with the community:

*Our interest in the Open Table model grew out of our desire to improve our aftercare services for youth completing our TLP. We saw it as a way to give our youth the additional relational supports they would need to successfully return to the community and avoid falling back into homelessness. We wanted to focus on longer-term outcomes than simply having a successful discharge from the program.*

Both Locke and her staff were favorably impressed with what they saw and heard and decided to move forward with efforts to integrate Open Table as an additional relational support system for their TLP youth.

### St. John the Evangelist Catholic Community

Katov and Open Table colleague George Cope met with Gary Tester, Executive Director for Catholic Charities of Central Florida, back in the spring of 2017 to present Open Table, including the research conducted to date on the initiative's efficacy. Tester then presented the Open Table program to Bishop John Noonan, who presides over the Central Florida Diocese, spanning nine counties and including 94 parishes. After Tester's presentation, Noonan made a declaration urging all of the churches in the Diocese to adopt Open Table within their parishes. To date, fourteen parishes within the Diocese have started Open Table. Cope described why he thought the Catholic Church was a good match for Open Table:

*I think the reason the Catholic Church in general is a good match for Open Table is because there is such a strong social justice foundation to their teachings. Bishop Noonan in particular liked the Open Table approach because it matched his intent that the church should pursue social justice through transformation and not transaction, which aligns with the views and approach of Open Table.*

In the summer of 2018, Tester reached out to Father John Britto at St. John's Catholic Community, a large parish of about 1,900 families, founded 19 years ago, located in Viera, Florida and about 20 miles from CYS. Father Britto

<sup>4</sup> Leveraging Relationships to Transform Communities, Baylor university Program on Prosocial Behavior, May 2020. [https://www.baylorisr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/BaylorISR\\_OPENTABLE-CaseStudy-FINAL-web.pdf](https://www.baylorisr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/BaylorISR_OPENTABLE-CaseStudy-FINAL-web.pdf)





was interested in strengthening the parish's outreach efforts and selected the Open Table approach as a way for the parish to become more engaged in serving the needs in their community. Father Britto engaged Deacon Michael McElwee and Linda Morrison to serve as the Organization Leaders for the parish for the St. John's Open Table program.

In September of 2018, Father Britto introduced the Open Table opportunity from the pulpit, and about 50-60 parishioners attended a presentation made by Open Table and Catholic Charities staff, at which about 30 committed as volunteers. Between October and December of 2018, the volunteers, consisting mostly of retirees over the age of 60, completed their Open Table training. It was also around December of 2018 that Deacon McElwee and Morrison first became aware of CYS. As McElwee explained:

*Prior to our meeting, we didn't even know Crosswinds even existed. For us, even beyond the Open Table engagement, it was helpful for us as a parish to become more aware of programs like this, and that relationship has allowed us to direct more of our time and resources to meeting community needs.*

#### Starting the Tables – First Steps

The first event to kick-off the Crosswinds Open Table collaboration was a holiday party, prepared for and hosted by the St. John's Table Members, for the 15 TLP youth currently residing with CYS and held on CYS grounds. The event was a big success, and all the youth expressed interest in, and excitement for, being a part of Open Table. Following the party, CYS held briefings with the Table Members, who by this time had formed into three Tables consisting of about 6 Members each. Morrison recounted those early days in the integration process:

*When we engaged with Crosswinds, we were not aware that this was a pilot program and this would be the first time anyone had tried to integrate Open Table with a Transitional Living Program. We were all very excited and energized after the party, but the briefings we got from Crosswinds afterwards informed us of additional requirements. Karen [Locke] talked a lot about things like professional distancing, background checks and other risk management issues, which are all locally determined and therefore not a part of the Open Table training.*

The requirement for fingerprinting and background checks was particularly daunting and led to a significant amount of delay for getting the Tables going. As time went on, CYS streamlined the process. While initially CYS instituted a number of restrictions in terms of requiring all Table meetings occur at CYS and requiring staff permission for Table Member communications with the youth/Friend, these restrictions were relaxed as trust developed. Locke reflected on the early adjustments, and the reasoning behind these restrictions:

*I was dealing with a number of concerns from RHY Leadership from the Administration of Children and Families as we were the first RHY grantee to try and adopt the Open Table model. We take our risk management issues very seriously, and I understand how, from where they stood, there was a concern about something going wrong, which is what risk management is all about. I wanted to do Open Table because I wanted to see what could go right, while also providing safeguards and protections for the youth under our care. Hopefully, through this pilot program, we could help RHY leadership and staff to understand that there are resources in the community that can help organizations like us better serve these vulnerable youth.*

### Implementing Open Table: Coordination and Communication Challenges

While the original plan was to identify TLP youth that were close to completing their stay with CYS, there were no youth nearing completion at that time. Since the Table Members were eager to get started, Locke decided to go ahead and launch the Tables, holding the meetings on CYS grounds with staff involvement.

A number of areas of challenge and culture clash occurred during the first few months of implementing the Tables, most of which revolved around the lack of clarity concerning the respective roles and responsibilities of the CYS staff in relation to the Table Members. Members were frustrated by what they perceived as a lack of communication from the caseworkers in response to queries concerning the Friend, and caseworkers felt inundated by the sheer number of Table Members trying to get information from them. As Morrisson explained:

*In hindsight, it would have been better if we phased in the Tables rather than starting them all at once. Then the volume of interactions would not have been an issue, and we could have focused more on working out collaborative roles and responsibilities.*

Another issue that arose in the early months was the seeming duplication and sometimes dissonance between the case worker's service plan for a youth and the life plan the youth developed with the Table.

About six months into Table implementation, Morrisson and McElwee had a meeting with Locke and some of her staff to address these issues. As Locke explained:

*There was a lot of stress and friction initially between staff and the Table Members. However, every time I spoke with the youth, they would tell me how much they loved their Table, and I could see a change in their demeanor and their hopefulness. Once I saw that, I knew I had to figure out a way to make this work.*

One of the actions Crosswinds and St. John's took was to funnel communications through Morrisson, one of the



Open Table Organization Leaders, as a single point of contact for Table Member concerns. In September of 2019, Locke also hired a new director for the TLP program from outside of the agency, Peter Phillips, as well as a new case worker, Tatianah Smith. As Locke explained:

*I had seen enough of the benefits of Open Table to know that this is something we needed to commit to, and that we needed to make changes in how we operated as an organization to better accommodate and integrate the Tables. Hiring new people from outside was particularly helpful, since they weren't steeped in how we used to do things and could help guide us into a new direction.*

#### A Fresh Start for Open Table

Locke's new hires both embraced Open Table immediately and saw it as a valuable resource and support for the youth. Joanie Johanesen, who served as a caseworker for 5 1/2 years before leaving CYS in the summer of 2019, was very excited to see CYS bring on the Tables. Johanesen explained her perspective that although Open Table was somehow perceived as a threat and disruption for some staff, she saw how the collaboration would be beneficial for the organization overall:

*I felt as though some of the staff were a bit heavy-handed and punitive in their approach with the youth, and there was a lot of power and control exerted over the youth. Having Open Table also invited a lot of eyes into the organization and brought a perspective that was more in line with my approach of engaging with the youth and developing a relationship. Along with the new staff hires, I think Open Table has ushered in a healthier culture among staff and an improved focus on helping these youth overcome the trauma in their lives and make them whole.*

Smith also shared the value of the Tables in terms of how she operates as a caseworker:

*I was not familiar with Open Table when I came to Crosswinds. It wasn't something they taught us about in school, so that was an adjustment as well, even though it was perfectly aligned with my philosophy and approach in working with youth. I think as human service professionals that, although we mean well, sometimes our egos get in the way, and we design programs and our work responsibilities in a manner that gives us the most control and authority. What has helped me overcome this tendency is to always keep the youth's needs front and center, and the efforts of the Table Members I have worked with seem to be of that same mindset, so I have prioritized the Members in terms of how I do my work and responding to their questions as promptly as possible.*



For Peter Philips as well, Open Table is especially important and aligned with his perspective that the youth belong to the community, and the Tables are a representation of the community. Phillips also helped to clarify the distinct purposes of the service plan, as produced by CYS and the life plans produced by the Friend with the Open Table:

*Service plans, such as the ones created at Crosswinds, are often service driven and in our agency's language. The Open Table life plan, on the other hand, is about the youth's individual goals. A large part of our efforts will be to better integrate Crosswinds life plans with Open Table and to be more mindful of the language and terminology we use and to be sure that it reflects the youth and our shared purpose.*

## UNDERSTANDING THE OUTCOMES OF THE ST. JOHN'S/CROSSWINDS OPEN TABLE DEMONSTRATION

As of March 2020, four Tables have completed their year Open Table commitment, and a fifth Table is one month into their engagement. This new Table embodies the aforementioned changes based on the experience from the first four Tables. It is important to recognize that, although the outcomes of four youth may seem small or inconsequential at first glance, the outcomes and changes brought about by the pilot effort are much broader than that. The impact and outcomes resulting from the CYS/St. John's Open Tables thus far occur on three levels:

1. The direct benefits to the youth/Friends served through the Tables.
2. The potential for CYS, through the added relational supports furnished through Tables, to transition youth back to the community sooner, and thus increase the number of youths they can help as a result.
3. The additional benefits and resources arising from the relationship with St. John's in terms of additional funding, access to in-kind services, and a greater visibility in the community, along with a better skill set for wider community engagement.

### Benefits to the Youth

Open Table is, first and foremost, about the healing power of positive relational supports for youth who have experienced homelessness and significant trauma. The central vehicle for those efforts is through the development of a life plan, intended to help the youth navigate life after leaving the TLP and becoming self-sufficient, which also includes the practical considerations of safe and stable housing, education and employment opportunities, and economic self-sufficiency. For two of the four Friends, this transition involved going to live with family: one in South Florida and another in Mexico.

The transient nature of youth in Florida served by Crosswinds is perhaps unique in comparison to RHY programs





in other states, as many youths are drawn to Florida during Spring Break and the heavy tourism emphasis. While it was disappointing for Table Members that may have looked forward to an ongoing relationship with their Friend, it does not mean that their efforts were in vain. Phillips helped by explaining the broader gains for the youth that experience Open Table:

*For Table Friends that leave the immediate community, it may be hard to track and measure their outcomes and success, depending on whether they choose to stay in touch with Crosswinds staff or their Table Members. Nonetheless, I strongly feel that their experience with the Table taught them the value of family and inter-generational supports, and they take those lessons learned about how to form healthy, supportive relationships as they return to their respective homes. We should celebrate that.*

One of the youths served by the Tables completed their first term at a local college through the help from their Table Members. The youth, whom we will refer to as Thomas for privacy purposes, is a particularly remarkable story, given the fact that he is on the spectrum for autism, and staff had discouraged him from pursuing college as they considered it unrealistic. They encouraged him to focus on opportunities they felt were more in line with his abilities. However, Locke doesn't fault her staff for making that assessment, because without Open Table it probably would have been an unrealistic goal.

#### Increasing Crosswinds Capacity

Beyond the direct benefits to the youths/Friends, Locke is beginning to rethink the roles and responsibilities of Crosswind staff within the new context of the Open Table collaboration. The traditional measure of success for an RHY Transitional Living Program is that the longer the length of stay, the greater likelihood of a positive outcome for the youth after graduation/completion. The reality of RHY TLP programs nationwide is that the average length of stay (ALOS) is only 7-8 months, while CYS' ALOS is between 9-13 months.

Locke sees one possible benefit of the Open Table relational supports is their ability to transition some youths back into the community sooner than they would otherwise, thus actually shortening the average length of stay, which means they would be able to increase their capacity by three or four-fold. As Locke explained:

*I believe the Open Table supports will allow us to focus more of our effort and attention in crisis intervention, stabilization, and ultimately triage of TLP youths to a Table. The appropriate performance measure for youths with an Open Table partnership may well be a shorter length of stay, because we can utilize the Open Table to help transition them back into the community, with the security of knowing they will have that support for a minimum of 12 months.*

### Improving Community Connections

The relationship established between CYS and St. John's has also improved the organization's connection to the community. St. John's recently dedicated its golf tournament fund-raiser exclusively to CYS based on their relationship. Locke estimates that CYS has received upwards of \$15,000 in direct funding and in-kind services and resources from St. John's since their partnership began. This does not include the value of the relational capital through the Table that made it possible for one of the Friends to pursue a college education that would otherwise have been out of reach. Beyond St. John's, this collaboration has led to a greater connection with, and visibility of, CYS in the larger community as well. As Phillips explained:

*I think the Open Table partnership has helped Crosswinds strengthen its value of community connections in a number of ways. For one, because many of the youths leaving the TLP will be transitioning into that community, it makes sense to better understand the possibilities that await them and the resources available for them. Secondly, I think it is a reminder to CYS that these are the community's kids, not Crosswinds', which should encourage more of an outward focus. One sign of this change is that we've developed an open house at CYS for our TLP, inviting the community to come in and see what we do and learn more about what we are about.*

## MAPPING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Another way of understanding what a relationally-focused effort such as Open Table look like and the value it produces is through social mapping, which is a process of specifically identifying what Table Members did, and what they got others to do, on behalf of their Friend. For many people, these things tend to happen organically through family members and others they can access through their social networks. For homeless youths such as those served through CYS, those networks do not exist.

The purpose of the social mapping exercise is to try to track and account for the time each Table Member spent assisting their friend, either through the weekly meetings or from other activities and meetings conducted in between each meeting. In addition, the social capital mapping exercise captures the value of other individual's time and effort through their relationship with one or more Table Members. Finally, when Table Members assist in an effort that produces a tangible outcome (e.g., helping the youth obtain grants to pay for community college), that value is used instead of simply counting the hours Table Members spent towards that particular effort.

Exhibit 1 shows the result of this social capital mapping exercise for one CYS Friend (mentioned previously). This



compilation and summary of both the types of activities engaged in by the Table Members and others in their network, along with an estimation of the value of that effort, as described in the paragraph above. This mapping exercise captured an estimated 227 hours of volunteer hours by Table Members over the course of a year, over \$6,400 in grants and tuition and fee exemptions, and a variety of other benefits, totaling over \$12,700 dollars.

Of course, the true value of the Table Members time and effort, including the time and effort of others within their network, is much higher, such as the value of a college education for a youth on the spectrum for autism as expressed in improved future earnings. The social mapping tool does help to understand how Tables 'do what they do', even though they can also vary significantly based on the Friend's articulated needs.

## OPEN TABLE GOING FORWARD

The initial Open Table experience, coupled with new staff that embrace this model, has triggered widespread changes in how Crosswinds perceives its role in this new partnership. As Smith explained:

*I think the possibilities with Open Table and St. John's are exponential. As a caseworker, I have gained so much more knowledge and awareness of additional resources out in the community. With regards to Open Table, specifically, it is important to remember that most of our youth are young adults by age, but emotionally, psychologically, and socially they are still children. They need the love, attention and nurturing that Table Members have been so eager to give to help them heal from past traumas and begin to mature.*

From the St. John's side, McElwee is equally optimistic, despite the many bumps along the road to get to where they are now:

*We hope to continue to recruit volunteers from the church to provide Crosswinds with as many Tables as they have youths that are ready for them. I have also been heartened to see how Table Members have grown closer to one another through this effort, becoming a family amongst themselves.*

### Recommendations for Replication

This demonstration project has many lessons learned, which CYS has implemented in its newest Table, and which would also be useful to reduce the challenges and conflicts they went through in developing this unique collaboration:

1. Communication: Establish a point of contact between Tables (e.g., through the Table's Organization

- Leader) and the RHY program.
2. **Expanded Open Table Orientation:** Volunteers not only need training as a Table Member, but they also need an orientation for the RHY organization and staff that will be providing the youth referrals to the Tables.
  3. **Open Table Orientation for RHY Staff:** RHY staff would benefit from examples such as Crosswinds to understand what Open Table does, and generally how relational and social capital from community-based volunteer efforts such as this represent a significant, and mostly un-tapped, resource in support of runaway and homeless youth. This organizational learning within RHY, in turn, can affect the ways in which the roles and the overall operational culture within the agency to find ways to support these unique, community-based collaborations. Furthermore, specifically focused relational support initiatives such as Open Table are relatively new, and few, if any, schools of social work or other youth worker certification programs have curriculum and training designed to prepare them for this type of disruptive innovation.
  4. **Maintain the Distinction between the RHY agency and Open Table:** While it is paramount to improve mutual understanding and knowledge between the two, it is important that both parties recognize the distinction between the two, in terms of skills, roles and responsibilities in relation to the youths.
  5. **Better Preparation of Youths in Being a Table Friend and Leading the Table Activities:** A central premise of Open Table is that the Friend directs the agenda, life plan development, and the overall collective effort of the Table. However, most of these youths have never been in this type of situation, and need help both in preparing for the Table experience itself (i.e., sitting in a room full of people waiting to help you), and the leadership and self-efficacy skills needed to cultivate and direct the social networks and relational capital towards their life plan and successful transition into the community.

Finally, should RHY seek to support these types of community integration models among its grantees, Locke feels as though the Funding Opportunity Announcement (i.e., the grant requirements to qualify for funding), the associated performance measures, and the technical assistance provided need to change in recognition of the distinctiveness of service provision under this innovation:

*With respect to performance measures, I think that TLP's that utilize the Open Table model should not be measured by the traditional standard that a longer ALOS is generally a better outcome, but instead be evaluated by measures that capture the value of relational supports, or social capital, for a youth completing its TLP. As it is, there are a lot of youths that leave TLPs early not because of success but because they decided it didn't work for them (i.e., attrition, not graduation). If we can shorten the length of stay and serve more youths while maintaining or even improving the prospects of long-term outcomes, we should get recognition*

for that. On the technical assistance side, we need the kind of assistance and training that will help other RHY grantees to implement this model without having to go through what we did.

## THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL, OPEN TABLE AND THE RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH ADMINISTRATION

As a means of encouraging their Transitional Living Program (TLP) grantees to develop these types of community partnerships, RHY issued a supplemental grant<sup>5</sup> to fund five grantees and additional \$25,000 per year for two years. Liz Darling, Commissioner for the Administration for Children, Youth and Families and Acting Associate Commissioner of the Family and Youth Services Bureau, which oversees the RHY program, made the following comments on the importance of social capital in the design of programs serving vulnerable populations, such as runaway and homeless youth:

*Social capital is often one piece of a larger intervention of social service delivery, and some of the most common strategies are peer-to-peer support and individual or group mentoring. This may involve compassionate volunteers who can play a longer-term role in service delivery, not replacing social workers or case managers, but working alongside participants in publicly or privately funded programs. Volunteers are motivated by their interest in serving others, their ability to use their previous work experience (e.g., retirees), and/or desire to transform their communities. Relationships are two-way streets, and volunteer mentors often get as much out of the connection as participants, for example as they get to know and learn from a resilient young person.*

CYS was one of the five selected, and three of the remaining four RHY awardees had reached out to Open Table to help them facilitate social capital partnerships such as the one they assisted on for CYS. For Katov, this represents a new and exciting chapter for the work of Open Table.

Jon Katov, CEO of the Open Table, observes:

*The importance of the collaboration between Crosswinds and Open Table is that it demonstrates the importance of combining community, government, family and youth to create community good. When RHY succeed, the whole community succeeds. The Theory of Change of Open Table starts with relationship, as does the effort of Crosswinds in serving RHY. The Tables of the RHY effort at Crosswinds demonstrate the power of a supportive community, especially when combined with the enthusiasm of the Crosswinds professional staff.*

<sup>5</sup> A supplemental grant refers to additional funding made available to existing grantees, upon application and selection, to receive additional grant funding for an expressed purpose.



*This study documents that when the Crosswinds staff saw that combining staff relational and clinical support with the relational assets of the Tables, the staff became completely supportive of the approach.*

We have seen that the majority of the RHY who have experienced Tables reported that Tables were transformative for their lives. The vision of the Crosswinds and Open Table collaboration is that relational assets can be brought to bear, along with existing formal interventions, on the crucial outcomes of programs like Crosswinds. Both the anecdotal and case study outcomes that have been achieved show that social cohesion and community good is greatly enhanced by access to the immense social capital of the community. The leadership of Karen Locke, ED of Crosswinds was essential to ensure that barriers were overcome, and that this effort is now being replicated in RHY efforts across the country.

## CONCLUSION

It is difficult today to think of a group that is more marginalized than those without a home. Yet, how we take care of the homeless is an extremely important marker of a healthy society. Research is needed that helps us understand if efforts to provide for runaway and homeless youth are effective. The key focus of this case study has been to highlight an exemplary organization that aids and supports this overlooked homeless population by bringing attention to a model that can be replicated by organizations that strive to serve runaway and homeless youth as effectively as possible.

Regrettably, research sanctioned by the federal government for addressing homelessness tends to overlook runaway and homeless youth. In spite of this oversight, community and faith-based approaches tend to prioritize focusing on aiding individuals and preparing them for living independently, in contrast to the supposition that many homeless individuals simply require permanent subsidies. If empirical research confirms a holistic approach is a better approach for some or all of the different homeless populations, then it would seem prudent to direct more of our limited resources to promote this more comprehensive approach for the homeless, especially runaway and homeless youth.

Unfortunately, there have been little efforts to assess the viability of more relationship-focused, holistic approaches towards taking care of the homeless. We believe the intentional collaboration between Open Table and Crosswinds, provides preliminary evidence confirming that efforts such as this, which draws from the human and social capital available through the faith community and elsewhere, can be successful in creating “transformation” of those in homelessness situations.

In addition to helping these efforts to get the respect and recognition they deserve; this research provides an opportunity for those serving the homeless to learn from their peers how to do so more efficiently. This case study gives important insights to the holistic approach of initiatives like Open Table that are able to tap into the reserves of volunteers through churches and civic groups, and why such an approach may be better for many homeless populations. The collaborative work of Crosswinds and Open Table is definitely an example of a best practice for developing stronger collaborations in the service of youth experiencing homelessness.





# EXHIBIT 1: OPEN TABLE SOCIAL CAPITAL MAPPING: ANNUAL SUMMARY ACTIVITY FORM

## I. Background Information

Open Table Start Date<sup>6</sup>: **2/2019**

Open Table Licensee (name of organization/church):

**St. John the Evangelist Catholic Community**

City and State:

**Viera, FL**

Name of contact and name of Referral Partner organization:

**Contact Name: Karen Locke**

Organization Name:

**Crosswinds Youth Services, Inc.**

City and State: **Cocoa, FL**

Name of Table Leads:

**Cindy LaMonica (Inside Director)/Sandy Samuel (Outside Director)**

Number of Table Members:

**6 Table members**

Name of Friend (First Name Only):

**Thomas<sup>7</sup>**

## II. Weekly Table Meetings

Total OT Meetings Held	Average Number of Table Member Attendees	Average Length of Meetings	Meeting Topics
35	5	1 hour	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. College Scholarships/Grants</li> <li>2. Employment</li> <li>3. Education (GED &amp; then College) course selections &amp; ways to improve GPA</li> <li>4. Applying for Social Security Disability Benefits due to Autism Spectrum</li> <li>5. Housing</li> </ol>

<sup>6</sup> For many (traditional) Open Tables, this would be the date of the 'Breaking of the Bread' between Table Members and their Friend.

<sup>7</sup> The Friend's name has been changed to assure confidentiality.

### III. Social Capital Mapping

The purpose of this section is to identify both the type, quantity and value of the social capital involved in the Open Table meetings which occurred in working with the Table Friend this month. Below is a listing of frequently mentioned sectors from past Open Table engagements. For each item noted, please provide the following information:

1. **Source of Social Capital:** This refers to the person(s) through whom the indicated social capital was provided, coded as follows:
  - TM = A Table Member;
  - FR/W = A Table Member friend directly within your sponsoring organization (e.g., church, business, civic group, etc.).
  - FR/O = A Table Member friend outside of your sponsoring organization (i.e., you know them or know of them).
  - FA = Someone from the Table Member's family (e.g., husband/wife, sister, brother, etc.)
  - RP = Someone from, or connected with, the referral partner (i.e., the organization that referred the Table Friend to your Table).
  - OTH = Someone or some organization a Table Member sought out in response to a friend's need (i.e., not a friend or family member, not from within sponsoring organization or referral partner)

Note: in some instances, you may need to include more than one Social Capital Source.

2. **Sector associated with the Social Capital provided:** This is to identify the general category associated with the Social Capital provided. Please use the 'Other' category(ies) if the appropriate sector is not listed and provide a name for that sector.
3. **Brief description of the Social Capital provided:** A Short description of the Social Capital provided (e.g., car repaired, doctor's appointment, childcare provided, etc).
4. **Number of units associated with the Social Capital provided (if applicable):** Please indicate the number of units of a given service provided. For example, number of hours of childcare services, number of meals provided, number of hours accompanying a Table Friend for a meeting, visit to a school for application, etc. This field is optional.
5. **Estimate of the value associated with the Social Capital provided (if applicable):** Please provide a rough estimate of the cost or value of the Social Capital provided, if applicable (i.e., this field is optional).

Example: During the course of the month, the following Social Capital activities occurred:

Sector	Source	Description	# of Units (and type)	Estimated Value
Education	TM, RP	Discussed eligibility for FAFSA and PELL grants and also Homeless Tuition Waiver. Assisted in locating the grant applications and told him he was eligible for a homeless tuition waiver which he applied for.	Application for grants and waiver of tuition and fees for homeless students	\$4,100 Grants \$2,364 in tuition and fee waivers <sup>8</sup> (\$6,464 per year less the \$4,100 in grants)
	TM, FR/W	Made aware of Taco Bell scholarship. connected Friend with a church videographer who helped Friend produce the video that was required to be submitted with the scholarship application	Table Member estimated hours: 6  Hours for videographer: 3 hours @ \$75/hour	\$150 <sup>9</sup>  \$225
	TM	With Friend's permission met with college advisers about disability. Gained access to TRIO program. <sup>10</sup> Also discussed appropriate course with college advisor.	Table Member estimated hours: 40	\$1,000
	TM	Provided IT assistance. Set up computer to access all college resources, organize folders and calendars, etc.	Table Member estimated hours: 6	\$150
Government	OTH	Connected friend on the Autism Spectrum with a Social Security Benefits Attorney who gave free advice on how to apply for disability benefits and how to appeal a negative decision, if needed.	Attorney Hours and market hourly rate: ½ hour	\$75 (@ \$150 hour)
Other (Please Describe)	TM, FR/O	Donated TV and sofa for apartment.	Estimated value of items	\$300
Weekly Open Table Meetings	TM	35 weekly meetings of an average of 5 TMs	175 hours	\$4,375
<b>Total Estimated Value of Social Capital</b>				<b>\$12,739</b>

<sup>8</sup> Homeless Waiver covered 2 semesters of college at Eastern Florida State College for 6 courses.

<sup>9</sup> Based on the Independent Sector's valuation of a volunteer's time at \$25/hour.

<sup>10</sup> The TRIO program at Eastern Florida State College - which provides tutoring to students - not only helped our friend with writing assignments but also gave him the opportunity to attend a leadership conference out of state and a social day at Disney World to help him connect with other students.





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