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Spotlight: Curtis Penn Director of Justice-Related Programs



For Curtis Penn, director of Felton's Justice Programs, looking out for the welfare of others comes naturally. Curtis has a warm and thoughtful demeanor; he smiles with enthusiasm when he talks about the positive impact that Felton's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD SF) and Felton Engagement Specialist Team (FEST) programs have on clients in need.

Curtis spent his early adolescent years in Washington, D.C., in a household headed by his maternal grandmother, Mattie Short, who emphasized the value of education, a strong work ethic and the importance of not using one's circumstances as an excuse for complacency. In addition to Curtis and two of his cousins, who also lived in her home, Mrs. Short took in foster children, giving all equal helpings of her unforgettable sweet potato pie with toasted coconut and life lessons on faith, cleanliness and responsibility.

"Even though I was just a few years older than the foster kids who stayed with us, each night I had to lay out their clothes and prepare what they needed for school the next day to try to make sure that we all arrived in time for class," Curtis recalls. "In a way, that laid the foundation for the social work that has become my career."



Dr. Robin Ortiz and Curtis Penn in the field

Curtis left Washington winters behind

and earned his associate of science degree in fire science in Southern California at Crafton Hills College in Yucaipa. His dream of becoming a firefighter became a reality when he joined the department in San Bernardino, California.

"While working in the inner city as a firefighter, most of our calls were medically related, i.e., shootings, stabbings, drug overdose and even suicide. I witnessed firsthand the negative impact that mental health (issues), substance use, gang violence and poverty often have on those from disenfranchised communities. Hence, choosing a career path that focuses on helping those who may be less fortunate stems from my work as a civil servant, firefighter.

"I would have to say working as an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) Firefighter led me to work in the field of social work and re-entry. Accordingly, years later, I

returned to school attending San Francisco State University for my undergraduate and graduate work in the fields of sociology and public administration, respectively," Curtis shares.

Before joining the Felton team, Curtis worked as a residential counselor/manager working with men who had both mental health and substance use issues, and as a re-entry counselor for those returning to their communities from jail and prison.

"Felton is involved in doing what I would describe as cutting-edge work. The programs that I oversee-both LEAD and FEST-are innovative, and I believe will be used as a template both statewide and nationwide. We provide services to an ever-growing population that has been impacted via gentrification, a drop in mental health services, mass incarceration and a host of other factors."

Felton's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) services are provided as part of LEAD SF, a multi-agency collaborative partnership program designed to divert repeat, low-level adult offenders at their earliest contact with law enforcement. The Felton LEAD team works with residents referred in the 16th Street/Mission District.

Felton's Engagement Specialist Team (FEST) members are skilled case managers working in collaboration with the San Francisco Departments of Public Health, Public Works, Homelessness and Supportive Housing and the San Francisco Police Department. The collaboration provides rapid response, community engagement, service linkage and relationship-building assistance to San Franciscans in the Justin Herman Plaza, Castro, Showplace Square, Mission and Civic Center neighborhoods. When San Francisco Mayor London Breed visited homeless encampments on July 17, 2018, Felton President and CEO Al Gilbert, Dr. Robin Ortiz, Curtis Penn and other members of the FEST team were on hand distributing nylon backpacks with items for homeless men and women.

Regarding the tour, Al Gilbert said, "Felton is so pleased to participate in such an effective collaboration with the Mayor and the Department of Public Health to secure appropriate accommodations and services for homeless individuals specific to their challenges. We're all committed to reducing homelessness in San Francisco."

Reflecting on the mission of FEST and LEAD, Curtis says, "The most rewarding is viewing firsthand the incremental changes that are taking place every day in people's lives for the better, due in part to the work that we do. The most challenging is realizing there's no clear-cut solution in addressing the needs of the population that we serve, and the concerns are just as complex and nuanced as the individuals themselves."

Curtis immerses fully himself in his work, and in off hours, he finds restorative balance in nature. He loves biking and beaches, and after those pursuits, Curtis returns ready to roll up his sleeves for another day dedicated to helping others, in a way that would make his beloved grandmother very proud.

ABC7's Spencer Christian and Preschool Graduates Celebrate!



ABC7's Spencer Christian

On August 3, 2018, 59 preschoolers in tiny purple graduation gowns and slippery mortarboards reached a milestone on their educational path at Felton's Cradle to College Preschool Graduation. This is the second year that the Children, Youth and Family (CYF) Division has held the jubilant ceremony at San Francisco State University. Enjoy highlights by [clicking here](#).

As guest speaker, ABC7's weather forecaster Spencer Christian was able to predict sunny skies for both the day and future of the young students preparing for kindergarten. "Dream big dreams and imagine what you might be able to do with your lives . . . and don't let anyone discourage you. All things are possible when you believe in

your dreams. I'm an example of that and you're all examples of that right now." An award-winning broadcaster and author, Spencer Christian worked for ABC's *Good Morning America* from 1986-1998 before joining ABC-owned KGO-TV (ABC7) in San Francisco.

Spencer shared that he grew up in poverty in Virginia, where his family did not have indoor toilets until he was 12 years old. "My parents were hardworking people who encouraged my brother and me to be people of faith, to be faithful and thankful for all that we had, and to believe in ourselves. And it is important for young people to have people around them who believe in them, because that encourages children to believe in themselves.

"I remember my parents, when I was this age, encouraging me to dream big dreams and reach for the sky." Spencer added, "For the parents out there, I can relate to the struggle and the challenges you face. There are financial challenges; there are the challenges of managing your time of being involved in your kids' lives. This is not easy-it's not an easy road to travel, but the rewards are so great, and this program today is one of those rewards. So, I want to salute you and thank you for all that you are doing. I want to thank Felton for just providing an amazing array of services for families and for young people like this. Continue the work that you are doing."

When asked about memorable moments at the graduation, Jennifer Curran, Program Director of the Mimi and Peter Haas Fund said, "It's inspiring to see the children and families onstage in the higher education setting continuing on in their education . . . This is just the start to a wonderful [and] enriching life, and I'm just so happy to be here."

The Mimi and Peter Haas Fund has supported Early Care and Education in San Francisco for over 25 years. Felton's Family Developmental Center is a member of the Haas Model Initiative, a model that the foundation supports in San Francisco by providing a deep level of resources and financial support to certain preschool agencies in the city.

Yohana Quiroz, Felton's Chief Operations Officer of the CYF Division and Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Services, thanked San Francisco State's Miriam Bright Institute for hosting Cradle to College and directed the processional before introducing Al Gilbert, Felton President and CEO. In his greeting, Al thanked the parents for allowing Felton to play a role in each child's success story, adding, "We've created a lot of innovative programs and services specifically with the intention of making your family stronger, increasing your resources, and supporting the achievements of your young people."

Parents of students from each of Felton's Early Care and Education centers received thunderous applause as they shared stories of their children's transformative development and thanked Felton staff for their support of the entire family.

After diplomas had been distributed and tears had been shed, CYF and TAY Division Director Kate Shadoan concluded: "We'll miss your kids more than you know, but we smile through our goodbye tears, and we're so grateful to have been part of their lives and part of your family during this time."

For more information about CYF programs, please call (415) 474-7310, or visit felton.org.

ECE Teachers Convene



On August 17, 2018, teachers from all of Felton's Early Care and Education Programs met at 2730 Bryant Street in San Francisco for a day of professional development focusing on the "why" behind the work that is done for the children and discussed research from the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child published by Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child. The illuminating studies emphasized the importance of the first five years in terms of brain development. For more information about the study, [click here](#).

During the afternoon, teachers participated in breakout sessions, during which they reviewed materials, identified new classroom practices and worked in teams for planning. Felton President and CEO Al Gilbert commended the teachers, and noted, "It's inspiring being surrounded by so many creative and committed learning professionals. The future of our children looks promising."

The day of professional development is an annual event.

Felton's San Mateo Early Psychosis and BEAM Programs Hold Graduation

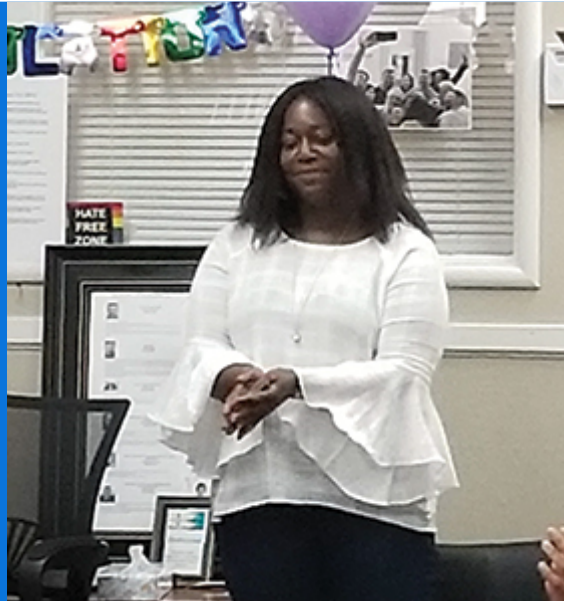
On August 23, 2018, the Felton Early Psychosis and Bipolar Early Assessment and Management (BEAM) Programs of San Mateo held a summer graduation celebrating the achievements of 13 program graduates. The intimate and moving ceremony was attended by 28 individuals, including seven graduates and their families, two current participants and their families, and program staff and agency leadership.

Program Director Bruce Adams facilitated the evening's festivities, and Division Director Adriana Furuzawa and President and CEO Al Gilbert both praised the graduates for their progress on the journey of recovery. Program Therapists David Johnson and Jeanine Seymour addressed each graduate individually while presenting them with certificates. Program Staff Mike Krechevsky and Reva Vrana Longacre offered words of wisdom and encouragement to the graduating cohort.

Reflecting on the milestone celebration, Bruce Adams shared, "It was such a precious evening. Even though it was our largest (semiannual) graduation in terms of turnout and number graduating, it maintained the sense of intimacy and closeness that we strive for in our graduations. I am honored to have been a part of the process in which these young men and women have grown so much and am thankful to have had the opportunity to be a part of their lives.

"My favorite part of our graduations is when the graduates and their family members opt to tell their own story of recovery and describe just how far they have come in their journey. We had several graduates and family members express heartfelt gratitude toward Felton's program staff and agency leadership that have been their partners throughout their progress toward recovery."

To view a previous San Mateo graduation, please click [here](#).



Program Therapist Jeanine Seymour



Felton and You

Felton's Justice-Related Services Offer Second Chances

Since its inception in 1889, Felton Institute has been historically known as an innovator, developer of programs and creator of policies focused on mental health and social services for people in San Francisco, the state of California, and across the U.S.

Felton's most recent suite of programs, Felton's Justice-Related Services program, offers transition-age youth and adults who have come into contact with the justice system an alternative to incarceration.

Felton's Justice-Related Services currently consist of five distinct programs and are focused on redirecting low-level adult offenders as young as 18 years of age away from crime. Clients of the programs often have complex mental health and/or substance abuse issues. Additionally, many are homeless.

Clients are case-managed and have access to a diverse set of social services specific to the needs of each individual. Our services encourage and support individuals to engage in positive, developmentally appropriate pathways, access support that create stability in their lives, and help prevent recidivism.

Felton's Justice-Related Services include:

Felton Engagement Specialist Team FEST

The Felton Engagement Specialist Team (FEST) is comprised of Engagement Specialists (skilled case managers) working in close collaboration with the San Francisco Departments of Public Health, Public Works, and Homelessness and Supportive Housing, as well as the Police Department to provide rapid response, community engagement, service linkage and relationship-building services to San Franciscans in the Justin Herman Plaza, Castro, Showplace Square, Mission, and Civic Center neighborhoods, with a focus on those who are insecurely housed or not housed. Engagement Specialists will provide outreach and service linkage to support clients to address their substance use and/or mental health needs, address physical health needs, secure housing, and promote wellness, recovery, and safety.

San Francisco Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (SF-LEAD)

Felton's LEAD services are provided as part of LEAD SF, a multi-agency collaborative partnership program designed to divert repeat, low-level adult offenders at their earliest contact with law enforcement. LEAD services are an alternative to jail and prosecution for those experiencing mental health, substance use and co-occurring

disorders. The Felton team works with referred residents in the 16th Street/Mission neighborhood. Implementing a harm reduction philosophy, staff provide clinical case management, behavioral health and wellness interventions to support clients in addressing their substance use and/or mental health needs, support recovery, and prevent recidivism.

Promoting Recovery and Services for the Prevention of Recidivism (PRSPR)

Felton's Prop. 47 services are provided as part of San Francisco's larger efforts designed to interrupt the cycle of substance abuse, unaddressed mental health issues, homelessness, and incarceration among adults and transition-age youth (TAY). Felton staff members provide clinical case management, behavioral health, substance use, and wellness interventions to meet the unique developmental needs of TAY in recovery.

Early Crisis Intervention and Eviction Assistance (EAP)

Operating since 1998, EAP leverages several hundred thousand dollars from other sources to guarantee rents for families in trouble. Over 500 families per year are helped to avoid homelessness, gross family disorganization, separation from familiar services and greater vulnerability to disintegration.

Young Adult Collaborative

In partnership with the Young Adult Court, the Young Adult Collaborative staff provide intensive comprehensive case management, life skills training and clinical interventions for clients who have committed felony crimes. Clients are transition-age youth (TAY) ages 18-25 who have experienced trauma, substance abuse and/or co-occurring disorders, and are deemed high risk to reoffend in the community. The program meets the unique needs of TAY, and helps them onto a positive developmental pathway into adulthood.

We at Felton believe that a second chance can be a powerful force when a client of Felton's Justice-Related Services has a strong desire to redirect the course of their life.


Please join us in extending second chances to those we service in San Francisco. This program not only gives participants a clean start on life, but also creates a healthier and safer city for all.

Please consider giving a gift to support Felton today! Call (415) 474-7310, or visit felton.org for more information.

To give to the cause for which you have passion, text FELTON to 41444 on your mobile device; it's quick and easy.

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