



*Lives Transformed*



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## Spotlight: Donna Legenza, Front Desk Receptionist



Donna Legenza

### Felton Institute Front Desk Receptionist

Donna Legenza has a megawatt smile that lights up the room; her eyes twinkle as she talks about her work and the causes that are dear to her heart. A native New Yorker, Donna and her five siblings grew up in Columbus, Nebraska, and enjoyed yearly camping trips with their parents. "I love the great outdoors," Donna recalls enthusiastically. "We used to camp in national parks with bears, buffalo, and deer." At home and around the campfires, Donna's mother and father instilled values that she upholds to this day.

"My parents taught us not to be prejudiced and not to judge others. Be kind to people, as you never know what they're going through. Listen well."

Listening well is a critical component of Donna's work at Felton, since, whether on the phone or in person, she is often the first point of contact for Felton clients. "It is most rewarding to greet clients with a positive, life-giving word, no matter how small, and to see their lives change and blossom. Sometimes it's challenging having four calls come in at once and juggling the priority calls so that no calls are lost! Don't want to lose the CEO or the CFO for sure," she smiles.

Growing up, Donna wasn't sure of her career path. "I was too short to be a flight attendant; I wanted to be an astronaut, but I was bad at math, and I was interested in nursing, but I couldn't afford college," she smiles. "I always wanted to do something exciting, like travel, whether [on] earth or [in] outer space, or work in a hospital. I wanted to make an impact on this world."

While working for the Department of Agriculture in Salem, Oregon, Donna was seeking more personal fulfillment in her work, so she enrolled in the International Air Academy in Vancouver, Washington. After the 16 week course, she was immediately hired to work in the reservations department for United Airlines and told to report to San Francisco. "I had never even been to California! When I first arrived, I was wide-eyed at the tall buildings, many people, many cars and fast pace of San Francisco! I rode different Muni buses daily in the beginning to learn the City!"

Donna worked with United Airlines for 14 years, then on switchboards at San Francisco Hotels and the Security Operations Center for Triple AAA before coming to Felton's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) in 2010.

"I appreciated the work that Felton accomplishes; I see the heart and zeal in staff and leadership for helping people! Felton employees keep focused and move through the challenges. They don't give up. They have hope, so it's passed on to their clients!"

Donna says that faith is the foundation of her life and that her personal motto is to "love people, even when they are acting bad, cause hurt people hurt people." In her time off work, Donna is very active in community organizations. Since 1992, she has served as a San Francisco Jail Outreach Facilitator with Aglow International, providing weekly outreach to women inmates at the jail. She is also Aglow's Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for the Southwest Coastal Region, which includes California and Hawaii, and serves on their National Emergency Preparation Task Force.

"The main point they want to emphasize is to know your neighbors! In a major disaster, First Responders won't have enough resources to aid all affected, so citizens will need to help each other out within their own neighborhoods. I have spoken at various Lighthouse and regional meetings on how to be prepared and how to make an impact in your community. I remind people to "be ready!" and to "be alert!"

Donna's lifelong commitment is, whenever and wherever she's needed, she answers the call.



## Young Adult Court Graduates Celebrate with Special Guest Mayor London Breed

On January 31, 2019, 17 participants in the Young Adult Court (YAC) program graduated in a heart warming ceremony held at the San Francisco Superior Court of California. YAC allows young people ages 18-25 who have committed certain offenses to have their charges reduced or dropped if they successfully participate in the program. This alternative court program offers youth a clean slate to move forward with their lives. The program is designed to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, and is one of the only programs of its type in the United States. Participants have access to job training, life skills, and multigenerational family support. They report their progress to Judge Chan, who presides over the court.

Young Adult Court is a collaborative partnership with the Superior Court, the Office of the District Attorney, the Office of the Public Defender, the Department of Public Health, Adult Probation Department, Felton Institute and Citywide Case Management, and is funded in part through the Department of Children, Youth and their Families.

The graduating class of 17 was the largest to date; the courtroom was packed with the graduates, their loved ones and guest of honor San Francisco Mayor London Breed. Judge Bruce Chan introduced the Mayor with an explanation to the graduates.

"For a year, for 18 months for some of you, you had to listen to me about deliverables. You had to listen to me about your wellness care plan, all these things, day in, day out, whether you come to court every week, show up for your case manager, go to work, things like that. Think about what the mayor does. The minute she gets up, on her to do list is end homelessness ... build affordable housing, have no crime, and create jobs. So as big a struggle as it has been thus far to graduate, just keep in mind what Mayor Breed has to do."



Mayor London Breed



Dr. Robin Ortiz, Judge Chan, Atim Boykin and Justin Jung

Mayor Breed shared the impact of her brother's incarceration on her family and offered words of encouragement and resources to the graduates.

"What I have decided to do is to make the kinds of decisions that are going to change what is normal. Decisions that will open the doors of opportunity, so folks like my brother and his friends never end up in the criminal justice system. The next generation will have a better shot at a better future. A program that I just launched called Opportunities For All will make sure we have a paid internship for every high school student in San Francisco. We have also expanded a number of our programs so we have more than just construction jobs, training adults for tech jobs or for work in the healthcare industry. I want to make sure that in addition to all of the people who are here, the family members, lawyers, case managers, for your future, I want to do my part. So I brought with me two members of my team who are here to really get to know all of you. I'm here because I care about your future, and I want to see a better life for each and every one of you."

Josue (Josh) Arce, Director of Workforce Development and Marie Benjamin from the Mayor's Office of Housing were present to provide information about job opportunities, training and affordable housing.

Justin Jung, Felton's Director of Clinical Case-Management, for Young Adult Court, congratulated the graduates, saying, "I can hardly think of a more open space than this courtroom. You guys came in week after week, month after month, in some cases year after year. And you put your lives on display. You shared with us your ups, your downs, triumphs, setbacks. Emotional growth,

change, and learning are neither easy nor simple. Yet, here you are now. It's been an honor and a pleasure to witness this journey. Congratulations to you all!"

Atiim Boykin, Felton's former Director of Clinical Case Management who now lives on the East Coast, surprised the graduates by attending the milestone ceremony that left both eyes and hearts full.

For more information about the Young Adult Court, please click [here](#).



## Felton at Lava Mae Pop Up Village



Angel Izaguirre, Janice Bush,  
and Keila Hurtado Magana



Janice Bush, Mayor London Breed,  
and Keila Hurtado Magana

On Tuesday, February 19, 2019, Felton's Engagement Specialist Team (FEST) participated in a community outreach event, known as a Pop Up Village, hosted by Lava Mae. Lava Mae repurposes retired transportation buses into showers and toilets on wheels to deliver hygiene and restore dignity to those who are homeless. The organization offers what they term "Radical Hospitality" on the streets of San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles.

The Pop Up Villages provide showers, haircuts, food, clothing, medical care, employment and social services.

The event was a great success for the FEST team, providers, and participants from all around the city. More than 70 people signed up for Felton services, outreach materials, and referrals.

San Francisco Mayor London Breed stopped by to meet participants and providers.

"It was an amazing experience being able to talk to and help link people to different services around the city. I would say the event was a success to help educate the community about the services that Felton can provide," says Angel Izaguirre, a member of the FEST team.

Felton anticipates ongoing collaboration with many of the participating organizations. Lava Mae offers services six days a week in San Francisco. For more information, visit [lavamae.org](http://lavamae.org).

## MINT Presentation



Debra Collins, LMFT, Member of Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT) Coach, Trainer & Educational Consultant for the Training and Research Division of Felton Institute presented at the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers annual international conference which was held in New Orleans, Louisiana, last year, to approximately 400 attendees.

Debra participated on a panel of providers who all work in either youth organizations or school-based settings. Her presentation focused on her early work with grant supported programs in school-based settings and her current work with Felton, training administrators and service providers within San Francisco Unified School District, working with the alternative schools programs and with the Transitional Age Youth population in Youth Adult Court.

In addition, with her colleague from the Wright Institute, Kristin Dempsey, Debra presented during a breakout workshop session on the adaptability of using Motivational Interviewing's approach-Elicit Provide-Elicit (or exchange information) for a variety of service providers and settings.

Debra discussed the flexibility of tailoring training for those in case management and other provider settings where information is shared, treatment models are already implemented, and staff turnover is great. She offered the history of this model, direct applications through case studies and led participants in a training exercise. Debra continues to be in high demand, due to her expertise.



## Wilkes Bashford Thank You Video



Last month, we shared that in December, San Francisco's Wilkes Bashford store supported a Felton family with more than \$1,500 in presents and donated \$20,000 to Felton!

Please enjoy highlights from the event [here](#).

We once again thank General Manager and Director of Stores Jeff Garelick, his team and Joe Durst.



Fashion icon Wilkes Bashford founded his eponymous store for high-end customers in Union Square in 1966 and was a constant presence there, until his passing three years ago. He was renown for his generosity and his legacy continues at both the San Francisco and Palo Alto stores.



## Felton and You: At the Heart of Felton is YOU!



Tieu Ly, Assessor Carmen Chu,  
and Cathy Spensley

In mid-February, many celebrated Valentine's Day, a day that focuses on love and matters of the heart.

At the heart of Felton Institute, is people, our dedicated staff, and those we serve.

Our carefully curated staff is passionate about serving people who live in San Francisco, the greater Bay Area and northern California. Each person who is selected as a member of Felton's family brings a wealth of experience, knowledge and innovation and executes their role within our organization from the heart, sincerely delivering the best services for the most successful outcome possible.

Many members of Felton's family have devoted a number of years of service to the children, youth, families, adults and elderly people we serve. That kind of devotion can only come from a place of love for their jobs and for the clients.

Felton Senior Division Director Cathy Spensley began her journey with Felton in 2004 as a volunteer, and today she is the director of Felton's Senior Division. Watch Cathy in her own words [here](#).

Cathy's love for working with elderly adults grew when her mother developed significant cognitive impairment which required her mother to move from the east coast to California to a family-run nursing home. Cathy and her husband regularly hosted parties, trips to the arboretum and to the zoo for her mom. To Cathy's surprise, a time that she expected to be difficult and depressing with her mother was a very different and positive experience.

"My mother appreciated spending so much time with me. And I had never been around seniors before, having lost my grandparents when I was young. I found the experience unexpectedly fun and surprisingly rewarding," said Cathy.

During the three years Cathy's mother lived at the nursing home before passing away, Cathy decided she wanted to work with seniors. She took advice and earned a master's degree, at the University of California at Berkeley, one of the top social work schools in the country, and one of the few to have a specialization in aging.

Cathy's enthusiasm for her work at Felton shines through as she smiles and talks about her work, "Felton is exceptional in that it recognizes a broader perspective of what excellence in social services really means. First of all, the agency works across the entire lifespan, from infants to the oldest old, as well as with families, both biological and chosen. And Felton has tremendous strengths in being able to breakdown silos, meeting clients where they are, and recognizing that the people we serve live in environments that need our advocacy."

"We specialize in critical areas that can use our help, such as early childhood development, criminal justice, and geriatric mental health. Felton also provides many opportunities for professionals to deeply experience and receive additional training in their areas of specialization. This is accomplished by an agency culture that encourages openness, flexibility, and an appreciation of new opportunities to learn and grow, from all levels of the agency," Cathy added.

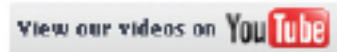
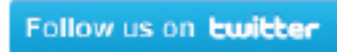
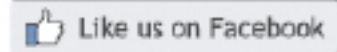
So much of what we do at Felton involves addressing the heart of people by providing exceptional mental health and social services to people of all walks of life, ethnicities, races and lifespan, from the youngest infants to the oldest elderly while focusing on low-income and at-risk people. Helping people is our passion.

At the heart of Felton is not only Felton's family and the people we serve, it's also you. As Felton Institute continues to grow, our needs grow as well. We would love to have you as our partner, so that more people in need can benefit from the many services we provide.

Please consider giving a gift to Felton Institute today. To give to the cause for which you have passion, text FELTON to 41444 on your mobile device; it's quick and easy!



**Your generous donations transform lives. Thank you!**



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