

Safe Or Unsafe?

Do you feel safe in Oakland?

Jordan Wilson: For the most part, I totally feel safe. I've lived here my whole life, and I know the city well. I don't feel like someone is out to get me. I think Oakland has a bad rep for being dangerous, and it's really not. Oakland is home. Oakland is the spot.

Dusty Blue: I live in North Oakland, so not really. My house got broken into a few months ago. We made a report about it online, because it was during the holidays and a sporting event was happening, so I knew there was no way we could possibly get a police to come out. I hear gunshots from my home regularly. I'm a block away from San Pablo Avenue. I keep everything locked up, and I'm very careful when I have to walk the streets at night. From my experience, in my neighborhood, I would say it's not the safest place to live.

Andrea Faber: Sure I do. I don't go to dark places at night or put myself in unsafe situations. Besides that, anything can happen anywhere. Accidents and trouble are everywhere. And really, I don't spend a lot of time thinking about things like that. I love living in Oakland. It's diverse, progressive, has great dining, and is only getting better.

Sabrina Santoyo: I work in Oakland, and I do feel safe here. I haven't had any incidents to make me feel otherwise. I grew up here in Oakland, so I know it well. Working in Montclair Village feels a lot safer than other areas of Oakland.

Edgar Reyes: Not really. I have to watch my surroundings constantly. I see people hanging out on the streets staring at everyone who walks by. I live in Oakland and I work on East 12th, which is somewhat hidden. My work is near BART, but the street doesn't have a lot of eyes on it. It's quiet, and things could happen, and no one would know. I would say I don't feel as safe as I should half of the time.

Ramona Chacon: I've always felt safe in Oakland, because I use caution—I do wherever I am. Even though I know bad things happen, I still feel OK here. I don't walk around using my cellphone or have money visible or easily accessible. I'm vigilant about paying attention to my surroundings. I carry my keys in my hand before I leave work, and I carry the one with a sharp point dominantly. —Gina Jaber



NEWS

Who's the BOSS, Now?

Showing up and showing out are the key ideas at this nonprofit, which puts people like Ronald Broach back on the road to success.

By Alec MacDonald

Ronald Broach helps turn lives around inside an inconspicuous white building just north of Oakland City Hall. The people who enter his ground-floor office arrive in search of employment, housing, or health care, vital needs that have escaped their grasp because of bad luck, bad choices, or both. Broach puts these needs within reach, offering a trove of resources and a wealth of compassion. "There are a great deal of positive aspects in everyone that sits in front of me," he explained, "and I focus on the positivity, while molding them and polishing them in areas where they are deficient."

He serves as a case manager for Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency, or BOSS, an East Bay nonprofit that provides various social services at numerous facilities across Alameda County. He operates out of BOSS' Career Training and Employment Center, where job-seeking individuals who have a disability, are homeless, or

Ronald Broach knows firsthand what BOSS can do for those who are down and out.

have been formerly incarcerated, can drop in to polish their résumé, practice their interviewing skills, or search for open positions. Beyond such basic assistance, though, the center offers a deeper, more-attentive, support.

Broach described meeting a man who had stopped by recently, just tagging along with a friend involved in BOSS programming. The newcomer showed interest in what he saw at the center, so Broach gave him some literature. Shortly thereafter, he ran into trouble. "He left, went out, and went to jail; went to jail for four or five days," the case manager recounted. "His first stop when he was released was right here. Didn't have a place to stay, didn't have a job, not anything."

Right away, Broach found the man a shelter to sleep at, ushered him through the county probation department's intake process, and procured him maintenance work at an apartment complex—all in less than a week.

Although this man got back on his feet quickly, achieving long-term stability will require sustained, concerted effort. So far, at least, he's exhibited promise. "He's continuing to show up and show out," declared Broach, invoking a popular BOSS motivational motto. "That's all I can ask, is to be active and be receptive to guidance. And it's looking good for him."

For the 47-year-old Broach, contributing to other people's rehabilitation bears special personal significance. "I'm able to express to them that I understand, I know what it takes to be successful in this program, and I understand

the challenges," he said, referring to the fact that before he started dispensing BOSS services, he was receiving them. "I get a great deal of gratification just to be in this position where I began—I began in the seat of the guy that I'm talking to now."

Despite growing up under the care of loving and devoted parents, Broach revealed, "I've made some mistakes throughout my journey, and unfortunately it caused me to be involved with the criminal justice system." Broach credited his mom and dad for laying the moral foundation that allowed him to thrive under BOSS after he encountered the nonprofit two years ago. Initially, Executive Director Donald Frazier hired him to pick up trash around Downtown Berkeley as part of BOSS' Clean City partnership with the city's department of public works. After proving himself in that role, he was promoted to counselor at Ursula Sherman Village, a shelter the nonprofit runs in northwest Berkeley. He discovered a taste for social justice activism through BOSS' Community Organizing Team, and eventually assumed the case manager position he holds at the center now.

Along the way, Broach became the center's first program graduate by progressing through a

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curriculum of job and life-skills training as well as keeping gainful employment for at least 60 days. He and 10 other participants received recognition for this accomplishment at a graduation ceremony in March 2015; another 30 graduates were honored in a second ceremony in October. Both events were attended by government officials, community leaders, and law enforcement personnel. While Broach felt impressed by the turnout of dignitaries at the most recent ceremony, he drew greater inspiration from the attendance of BOSS participants representing the next graduation class. They are scheduled for their own ceremony this month, and their presence signaled to him their desire and commitment to follow in the footsteps of those who have demonstrated the transformative power of BOSS programming.

"It has worked for me," he said. "And if I can do it, you can do it."

To learn more about BOSS, visit www.Self-Sufficiency.org. For details about the March 24 BOSS Career Training and Employment Center graduation, call 510-419-0669.



ZEITGEIST

Hayward Is Chic, But Not Too Chic

The rising economic tide has floated all the way to Hayward, which boasts a burgeoning downtown and healthy nightlife.

By Carolyn Jones

There was a time in Oakland—say, one year ago—when one could meet some friends for a beer downtown and 1) find parking, 2) hear one another, and 3) not spend \$100. But as Oakland's hipster and real estate stocks continue to soar, frugal and fun-loving Oaklanders can rest assured: There is still a place we can go for a casual, low-cost and fun night out: Hayward.

Downtown Hayward, once an amalgam of smoke shops and boarded-up storefronts, is enjoying a nightlife renaissance, fueled by refugees from Silicon Valley's soaring rents and Oaklanders seeking a low-key night out. The blocks around B Street, Foothill Boulevard, and Main Street boast more than a dozen bars and restaurants, ranging from upscale to funky and everything in between. Parking is plentiful and free, the crowds are diverse and friendly, and a shot of Jameson's will set you back \$4.

"When I went to the Hayward City Council in 2012 to open my business, they didn't know what a wine shop was. They thought I was opening a liquor store to sell malt liquor to the homeless," said Darren Guillaume, owner of Doc's Wine Shop on Foothill. "I told them, 'I want to bring new people to downtown Hayward.' They said, 'You mean, from Castro Valley?' I said, 'No, France.'"

Guillaume, a certified sommelier, chose Hayward because, by his estimation, there were no other wine shops within a 17-mile radius. With Hayward's proximity to Oakland and the San Mateo Bridge (and therefore Silicon Valley), it was a prime target for urban renewal.

He stocks more than 200 kinds of French,

Italian, and Spanish wine, and has free tastings daily. His business saw 4 percent growth annually its first three years. But more recently, it has jumped 15 percent, he said.

"There's just been a dramatic change," he said. "I think more people are moving here from Silicon Valley and San Francisco, because of the rents, and they're used to good wine and good food.

"I don't regret my decision to move here at all. It's great to be part of this renaissance," Guillaume.

The city of Hayward has done its part, as well. Its \$105 million re-configuration of downtown streets has routed thousands of motorists daily off Foothill Boulevard and through the side streets, past the small businesses and restaurants. The result is that the 65,000 commuters a day who pass through Hayward en route to Interstates 580 and 880 now get a glimpse of the charms of downtown, and maybe even stop for a libation.

The city also installed "Welcome to Hayward" gateway arches and signs, artwork, hundreds of trees and shrubs, bike paths, crosswalks, and other features to make the downtown seem more inviting.

Bismarck Blanco, 35, a human resources analyst who's lived in Hayward since high school, said he has noticed the change.

"When I was growing up, Hayward was not the spot," he said. "We'd go to the city or Oakland. But now, it's chic. Hayward is chic. Now, when we go out, we stay right here."

Within a block or two downtown, fun-seekers can visit Buffalo Bill's, one of the state's first microbreweries, and home to what some call the Bay Area's best nachos; Bijou restaurant, known for its basil gimlets and a bartender, Dave, who expertly juggles cocktail shakers; the Bistro, with live music almost every night; the Stein Lounge, whose ceiling is hung with hundreds of German beer steins and where one can buy peach Jello shots topped with fresh homemade whipped cream; the Turf Club, one of the Bay Area's oldest gay bars that's now popular with all orientations, thanks in part to a fabulous tiki patio; and the Funky Monkey, which can only be described—in the most affectionate possible way—as a classic East Bay dive bar. A new cineplex opened at B and Foothill, the Hayward Area Historical Society has

Photo by Pat Mazzeri