



# Fulfilling Promises

FALL  
2015

*Creating a brighter future for foster children®*

## Camp Connect Takes Over 110 Foster Kids to Julian

On Thursday, August 6th a record-setting 111 campers and 85 volunteers loaded busses bound for Julian for the 8th annual Camp Connect summer camp. This camp is a unique program that gives foster children that have been separated from their siblings an opportunity to reunite and spend four days and three nights with one another. With the support of Kevin Prior, CEO of ICW Group Insurance and one of our most loyal supporters, we gave these kids an experience to remember.

As the new Camp Connect Manager, I was eager to see the program in action. I was inspired by the campers' tenacity and amazed at their compassion for one another. While campers got to enjoy traditional activities like rock climbing, archery, horseback riding, zip lining, scrapbooking, music therapy, and singing, they also experienced something far more valuable: they fit in. For a few days, they were surrounded by other kids just like them, who know what it is like to be in foster care and separated from a sibling. The thing that set them apart most of the time was normal here, and they knew they were not alone.

As I made my rounds to each activity, checking in on everyone and making sure they were having fun, I asked each camper what his or her favorite part of camp was. One particular camper, who at first told me his favorite part was the mud pit, pulled me aside and said, "King Bee [my camp name given to me by the campers] I want to change my answer about my favorite part of camp." I said okay and asked what his new answer was. "King Bee, this is the first time since I stopped living with my dad that I feel safe, and I know my brother is safe with me. I love you for that." Camp Connect is truly keeping families together.

**Lenny Leszczynski, Camp Connect Manager**





## Message from the CEO

*As fall approaches and students return to school, excited to start a new grade and move up to greater things, we too are excited by opportunities for growth and change.*

*Over the past two years, we have been fortunate enough to be able to grow two of our most impactful programs, Guardian Scholars and Camp Connect. Last fall, we doubled Guardian Scholars, awarding scholarships to 100 former foster youth. Camp Connect also served 20% more children through our four-day Sumer Camp and one-day events each month, allowing siblings separated in foster care to reunite year-round.*

*Even with these successes, we know that the needs of foster youth in our community are great, and we must continue to grow to meet these needs.*

*From time to time, we are contacted by other organizations throughout the region who are interested in Camp Connect. After eight successful years, our Board of Directors decided to expand Camp Connect into other cities over the next few years through partnerships with similar nonprofits.*

*For every two students who are awarded our scholarship, one is still turned away due to lack of funding. This is why we are working to build an endowment fund, so that we can help all of San Diego's foster youth achieve their dreams of a higher education in perpetuity. More information will come regarding this great effort to support our youth.*

*We will continue to grow, adapt, and change in the future, so that we can truly fulfill our mission to create a brighter future for all foster children in San Diego County and beyond. We could not do this without the help of dedicated, caring people like you. We thank you for your support, and we look forward to working together as we grow into the future.*

Tonya L. Torosian, MSW, CFRE

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## Corporate Spotlight



Each summer Promises2Kids welcomes ten foster youth into the Junior Guardian Scholars program, each with a different background, unique personality, sometimes-opposite lifestyles, but each with one common goal – to graduate high school and attend college. For most foster youth, high school is a difficult time in their life. They face the realization of exiting the foster care system and entering adulthood with little or no support. Emotions are high, feelings are mixed and some begin to experience a sense of self-doubt.

Promise2Kids' work is to inspire foster youth to believe in themselves and see their future and success. Last month, Promises2Kids took nine of our "Juniors" to San Francisco, where they toured several colleges, including the University of California, Santa Cruz, San Jose State University, University of California, Berkeley, and San Francisco State University. In addition, they were given a private tour of Google Headquarters, where they met with a computer engineer, were able to ask questions, explore the possibility of being part of this field, and of course...working for Google.

This was possible because of the support of our corporate partner, Southwest Airlines, who provided round-trip airfare for each student. This was a trip of many firsts! First time flying in an airplane, first time visiting a college campus, and for some, the first time riding on a cable car.

Thank you Southwest Airlines! Your generosity created a lifetime of memories for our youth and helped each one get one step closer to success.



## Foster Funds

The Something Special Fund provides additional funds to make foster children's wishes come true. We receive all kinds of requests from football gear and class rings to music lessons. This summer we received a request from Akayla, who had been accepted into Rady Children's Hospital's Summer Medical Academy Internship Program, and needed support to attend. The internship gives highly motivated individuals hands-on clinical experience to help them pursue their interest in the field of medicine.

A few weeks after Akayla got the news that Promises2Kids was able to honor her request, she sent us a handwritten note telling us all about her exciting experiences. She thanked us for helping her take advantage of this amazing opportunity that will impact the rest of her life.

# Dream On

**2015 Dream On Concert Gala  
Raises Over \$600,000**



*A special thank you to the Gala Chairs: Abeer Hage, Lynda Kerr, Jolene Perry, Deborah Marengo, Joan Waitt, and May Zawaideh.*

**4** This year, the Dream On Concert Gala presented by Kevin Prior & ICW Group Employees featured the internationally renowned musical artist Bonnie Raitt, and was enjoyed by more than 500 guests. Held at the gorgeous private La Jolla estate of Board Member Joan Waitt, attendees enjoyed an exclusive Silent and Live Auction, a scrumptious sit down dinner catered by local chef extraordinaire Jeffrey Strauss of Pamplemousse Grille, craft cocktails by Please & Thank You, and moving speeches by former foster youth Maria Brown and Promises2Kids CEO, Tonya L. Torosian.

Thanks to all the dedicated attendees, generous supporters, and countless in-kind donations, Promises2Kids is proud to announce that over \$600,000 was raised, providing critical funds needed to continue and grow the annual programs made available to the 3,300 San Diego County youth that on any given day live in foster care due to neglect or abuse each year. These programs include but are not limited to:

**A.B. AND JESSIE POLINSKY CHILDREN'S CENTER**  
An emergency shelter for children who are removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect, this facility protects and cares for nearly 2,000 children a year.

**CAMP CONNECT** A program that reunites sisters and brothers who are separated in the foster care system through a four-day, residential summer camp and 10 additional day events throughout the year.

**GUARDIAN SCHOLARS**  
A program that, beginning in high school, works with foster youth to ensure they graduate from high school, advance to college, and complete their higher education.

**FOSTER FUNDS**  
Foster children often feel alone and isolated and may go without simple pleasures of childhood such as birthday gifts, a sports uniform or a musical instrument. Promises2Kids

has special funds set up to support these needs not met through typical funding.

**THANK YOU TO THE DREAM ON CONCERT GALA HONORARY COMMITTEE:** Supervisor Greg Cox, Brian Gunderson, Deborah and Claude-Anthony Marengo, John Matty, Supervisor Ron Roberts, Lee and Stuart Posnock, Kevin Prior and Raegan Hillmann, and Joan Waitt.

**SPECIAL THANKS** to Abeer Hage, Lynda Kerr, Jolene Perry, and May Zawaideh for underwriting the VIP Sponsor Party at LAuberge Del Mar in May.

Many thanks again to all of our continued and loyal supporters; we truly could not do it without you.

**PHOTOS L TO R:** David Hoppen, Joan Waitt, Tonya Torosian, Deborah Marengo, Raegan Hillmann and Kevin Prior; Joan Waitt's estate; Bonnie Raitt; Abeer Hage, Deborah Marengo, Joan Waitt, Tonya Torosian, May Zawaideh, Lynda Kerr, and Jolene Perry; Norma and Gary Hirsh.

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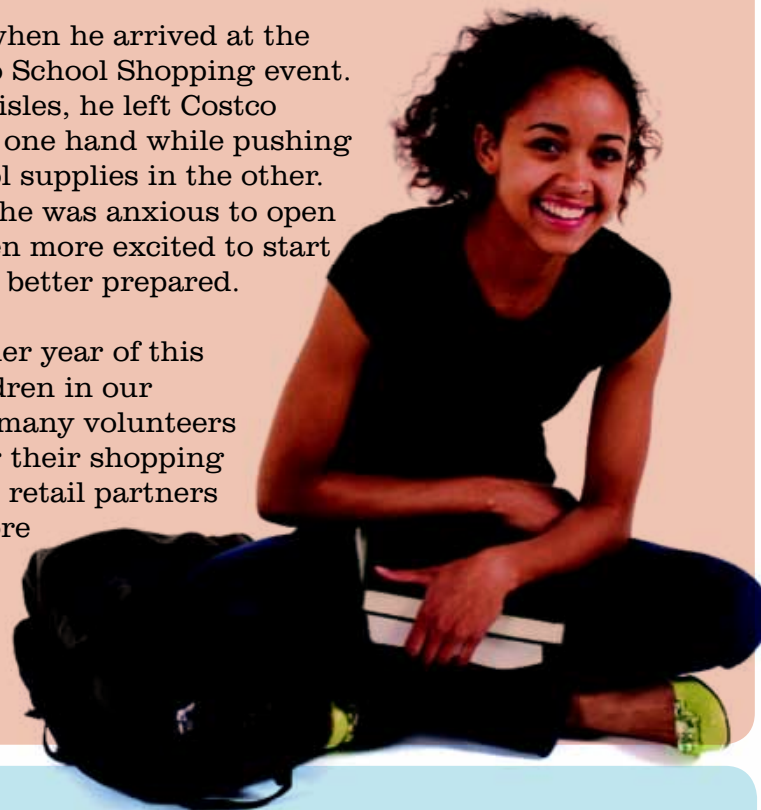
## Back To School

With summer coming to an end, Promises2Kids once again hosted our annual Back to School Shopping during August. The start of a new school year is an exciting time for many students, but for foster youth it can be overwhelming with feelings of not fitting in or being unprepared.

Thanks to David Dunn, over 950 foster youth went shopping to help make the transition back to school a little easier. Each youth received \$200-\$300 to shop for clothes, shoes, Tablets, flash drives, backpacks and other back to school essentials.

One young man was ecstatic when he arrived at the Promises2Kids annual Back to School Shopping event. After searching down all the aisles, he left Costco holding a brand new Tablet in one hand while pushing a cart full of clothes and school supplies in the other. As he walked out of the store, he was anxious to open up the packaging and now even more excited to start his first year of college feeling better prepared.

We were thrilled to offer another year of this unique program to foster children in our community. Thank you to the many volunteers who assisted the youth during their shopping and a special thank you to our retail partners Costco and Old Navy. Each store provided extra staff members and accommodations for the 950 youth who participated in the shopping event.



## Donovan Greer is a Rockstar Volunteer!

Successful Camp Connect events come with hard work and support from a great team of volunteers. Donovan Greer is one amazing team member and a veteran volunteer. He has been a volunteer for 5 years and keeps returning for the "...experience of bringing positive influence and change to the lives of these foster youth. ...in doing so, you enrich your life as well. The simple act of coming together with other volunteers, guiding and leading as a positive role-model, and seeing such favorable impact on the youth is absolutely invaluable."

Donovan is an all around great person with an enthusiasm that is absolutely contagious. His big bear of a heart and good will is why we say Donovan Greer is a Rockstar Volunteer!

**Are you or someone you know ready to become a volunteer and make a difference in the life of a foster child? Please visit [Promises2Kids.org](http://Promises2Kids.org) and go to our Support page, or email Eric Ayaso, Volunteer Manager, at [Eric@promises2kids.org](mailto:Eric@promises2kids.org).**



## Guardian Scholars Awards Reception 2015

In June, Promises2Kids enjoyed another outstanding Guardian Scholars Awards Reception, held at the beautiful Del Mar Country Club. The event was well attended by over 130 students, mentors, Promises2Kids donors and supporters, including our sponsor, Mission Federal Credit Union.

This year, we celebrated 15 Guardian Scholars as they reached their goal of becoming college graduates. We also welcomed our new class of 100 students, which is our largest award class since Guardian Scholars began with 10 students in 2001.

Nationally only about 50% of foster youth graduate high school and less than 3% graduate college. Promises2Kids Guardian Scholars has an 80% success rate – our students are staying in school and graduating.



### We would like to congratulate the Guardian Scholars Graduate Class of 2015:

**Sade Burrell** Master's Degree - University of Southern California

**Evie Lin** Bachelor's Degree - University of California, San Francisco

**Zefora Ortiz** Bachelor's Degree - University of California, Berkeley

**Sarah Colton** Culinary Arts and Baking Certificate of Achievement - San Diego Grossmont Community College

**Christy Mader** Bachelor's Degree - San Diego State University

**Sandra Ramirez** Bachelor's Degree - California State University San Marcos

**Yolanda Cooley** Bachelor's Degree - University of California, San Diego

**Kaya Mazon** Bachelor's Degree - San Diego State University

**Jennica Rebelez** Bachelor's Degree - University of California, Santa Barbara

**Irene Ekdahl** Bachelor's Degree - University of California, San Diego

**James Monroe** Bachelor's Degree - California State University San Marcos

**Mei Sun** Bachelor's Degree - San Diego State University

**Anthony LaMadrid** Bachelor's Degree - San Diego State University

**Claudia Orozco** Bachelor's Degree - California State University San Marcos

**Nancy Tran** Bachelor's Degree - California State University San Marcos

## Join the Children's Circle and help better the lives of thousands of children!

The Children's Circle is a membership program that supports all of our programs and services designed to create a brighter future for foster youth. When you become a member, you become part of a special group of people who have united with Promises2Kids to ensure that foster youth have the resources they need to address the circumstances that brought them into foster care, overcome the difficulties of their past, and grow into healthy, happy, and successful adults.

Join the Children's Circle today! Your annual gift of \$100 or more will ensure Promises2Kids continues to provide the programs so desperately needed for San Diego's foster children. Gifts can be made annually, quarterly, or monthly.

For more information contact Andréa Muir, Director of Philanthropy at (858) 427-1103 or join online at [www.promises2kids.org/childrens-circle](http://www.promises2kids.org/childrens-circle).

Together, we will create a brighter future for foster children®.



**PROMISES2KIDS**

*Creating a brighter future for foster children.®*

9400 Ruffin Court, Suite A

San Diego, CA 92123

858-278-4400

Promises2Kids.org

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**Make a donation to support San Diego's foster children today  
at [Promises2Kids.org](http://Promises2Kids.org)**



**To learn more about how you can help, contact  
Merry Lampinen at (858) 427-1112 or  
[Merry@Promises2Kids.org](mailto:Merry@Promises2Kids.org)**

**The Holidays are Approaching Fast -  
Partner with Promises2Kids**

**Help Us Brighten The  
Holidays for Foster Children**

The holidays will be here before you know it! While it is a happy time for many, for foster children, it can often be a painful, lonely reminder of their situation. But you can help us make the holidays a little merrier for San Diego's foster youth.

Would your business like to partner with Promises2Kids this holiday season? Whether you are a small family business or a multi-million dollar corporation, we want to partner with you to support foster children. Help us raise funds for foster youth this winter or join our Give From Your Heart Holiday Gift Drive.

With a small effort, you can make a huge difference in the life of a foster child this holiday season.