



Fulfilling Promises

SPRING
2016

Creating a brighter future for foster children®

2015 Give From Your Heart Holiday Gift Drive

There may be no better feeling than giving back to the community during the holidays. This year, San Diegans truly gave from their hearts to ensure this holiday season was a little bit brighter for local foster youth.

For the 22nd year in a row Promises2Kids partnered with the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), collecting the most gifts ever and having more than 200 holiday bins around San Diego County to collect donations. Hundreds of local business, organizations, and families collected more than 19,000 gifts for more than 3,300 foster children. From mountain bikes to ponies, Barbie dolls to hot rods, sports equipment to game boards — you name it, the community made sure that every foster child's wish list was met. If that wasn't enough to show the power of community, this year just over \$11,000 in gift cards was collected to ensure that no foster child was left out during this holiday season.

Promises2Kids' Give From Your Heart holiday gift drive would not have been possible without

the outpouring of support from BOMA San Diego, KUSI, American Assets Trust, and Boyer Moving and Storage. With these invaluable community partnerships, we are able to stay true to our mission to create a brighter future for foster children.

Give From Your Heart is evidence of the good that results from community collaboration and compassion. Other holiday support was generously provided by Sleep Train who donated thousands of gifts, Wendy's who had 30 locations hosting a holiday bin, Poway Elks Lodge #2543 who collected \$4,550 gift cards, Ben & Jerry's who are always willing to support Promises2Kids by providing delicious ice cream, and of course, everyone who generously donated a gift.





Message from the CEO

This year, we are thrilled to celebrate 35 years of service to San Diego's abused and neglected children. Over the last 35 years, Promises2Kids has achieved tremendous things. We broke the silence surrounding child abuse, bringing this critical issue to the forefront of the community's mind. We raised over \$12 million to build the A. B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center, San Diego County's emergency shelter for abused and neglected children. To date, this safe haven has cared for over 50,000 children.

Each year, Camp Connect gives nearly 500 siblings separated in foster care the chance to reunite and maintain crucial bonds. Our Guardian Scholars program has led the way for former foster youth who dream of a higher education. So far, we have helped over 200 youth graduate from college.

*But there is so much more that can be done, that must be done, to give these children hope for a brighter future. That is why we are expanding our programs and services to better serve foster youth in San Diego and beyond. We are **expanding Camp Connect to other parts of the Country**, so that siblings separated in foster care can rebuild their family bonds. Best of all, we are embarking on a bold endeavor **to ensure every foster child in San Diego has the opportunity to gain the skills and education needed to ensure they have a pathway to a successful future.***

They say it takes a village to raise a child, and we know this better than most. Every family member, teacher, friend, social worker, and mentor in a child's life shapes them as a person. Every dedicated volunteer, community activist, and generous donor shapes the world in which they live, giving them a chance at a better future.

We thank you for all of your support in helping raise these special children, and supporting our mission to create a brighter future for foster children.

Tonya L. Torosian, MSW, CFRE

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Corporate Spotlight:



Three Leading Corporations Come Together to Serve Foster Youth

For many foster youth, Thanksgiving is an emotional time of the year. While many of their friends celebrate with close relatives or take family vacations, our youth are often searching for a home to celebrate or call their own for the holiday season.

Fortunately, this year AIM Loans, Sleep Train and Jimbo's Natural Foods Grocer provided a heartwarming, welcoming and family oriented Thanksgiving to our Guardian Scholars!

With thanks to Jimbo's Natural Foods Grocer, on November 18, 2015 Promises2Kids hosted a family style Thanksgiving dinner for its high school aged Guardian Scholars, also known as Junior Guardian Scholars. Jimbo's was so kind to provide a delicious turkey dinner with all the fixings and side dishes.

In addition, one week later, AIM Loans and Sleep Train gathered to provide a memorable Thanksgiving event for our Guardian Scholars – former foster youth currently pursuing post-secondary education – and their mentors. Guardian Scholars mingled with mentors at the beautifully decorated AIM Loans building, then sat for a joyful Thanksgiving meal provided and served by Sleep Train employees and tasty candy bars provided by AIM Loans employees.

Each event provided not only a heartwarming and welcoming environment, but also an opportunity for our Guardian Scholars to celebrate Thanksgiving amongst those who have not and will not give up on them.

Thank you AIM Loans, Sleep Train and Jimbo's Natural Foods Grocer, for providing a memorable Thanksgiving for our Guardian Scholars!



Foster Funds : Something Special Learning to Jump In

The Something Special Fund provides for wishes and special requests that most children take for granted. For example, we received a heartfelt request last summer regarding a child (Ramon) who lives in a household where his siblings know how to swim, but Ramon did not. His social worker explained that Ramon felt left out when his siblings went swimming and it crushed his soul. With Something Special, Ramon was provided funding to take lessons to learn how to swim. Since learning how to swim, his social worker explained how much confidence Ramon has developed and how happy he is that he is able to participate in the same activity as his siblings. What a great way to strengthen their bonds!

Holiday Cheer for All to Hear



Ring in joy filled gatherings during the holidays for foster youth:

Dinners, shopping and time with friends, brothers & sisters.

Dinner for Guardian Scholars

The holidays can be difficult time for foster youth. With most of our Guardian Scholars students not having a traditional family, the holidays can be overwhelming. Kathryn and Donald Vaughn and Lynne and Steve Doyle spent weeks preparing an amazing event for our scholars as they returned home after a long semester. The Vaughn family opened their home to over 150 Guardian Scholars students, mentors, and loved ones to celebrate the season. Delicious pasta from Old Venice Restaurant was served and students were able to celebrate the season with their entire Promises2Kids family.

With decorations as far as the eye could see, and holiday music filling the air from DJ Don Vaughn, students were filled with cheer and delight as they came together in celebration. The Holiday Soirée offered Guardian Scholars students and mentors an opportunity to share their mid-year successes and hopes for a prosperous new year with each other. A heartfelt thank you goes to Kathryn, Donald, Lynne and Steve for all of their generosity in planning and hosting this wonderful event!

Holiday Fun for Foster Siblings

This December, Camp Connect brought together 56 siblings that have been separated in foster care to celebrate the holiday season at Petco Park's Holiday Wonderland. The park was transformed into a festive celebration of holiday cheer. Campers enjoyed all of the activities the Wonderland had to offer, from sled races, Ferris wheel rides, playing in real snow, beautiful light displays, and best of all, enjoying time with their siblings. One pair was especially excited to attend. Little sister Kara waited eagerly by check in, holding a hand-made gift for her brother. When her big brother Mark

arrived, she almost crushed his gift between them from hugging him so hard. The two spent hours playing together, enjoying every ride, display, and activity, and celebrating their only chance to be together before Christmas. At the end of the day, every camper received a brightly wrapped gift. But instead of accepting a boy's gift, Mark asked for a girl's gift. As Kara was just about to leave, Mark ran to her, hugged her tight, and gave her the gift that was meant for him.

Annual Holiday Shopping Event

Smiles. Giggles. Squeals of delight. These were the sounds of our foster youth at the Promises2Kids' Holiday Shopping Event made possible by Mr. David Dunn. Over 1,000 foster youth were treated to a special shopping day in December.

The children delighted in buying the latest video games, the newest style of shoes and clothes, the coolest gear for sports, and gifts for important people in their lives. One boy was "all smiles" as he bought a football for the younger brother he rarely sees. He talked excitedly about delivering the gift, seeing the look on his brother's face and spending time with him throwing the ball. It was a magical moment.

We want to offer a special thank you to our partners, Costco, Walmart, Starbucks, Souplantation, Panera Bread and many more. An extra special thank you to Gina and Ed Backes and some special members of the Al Bahr Shrine, Nancy and John Ford, Charlie Webb and Dave Berman, who braved the rain and wind to provide a hot dog dinner for our shoppers. Promises2Kids is grateful, not only during the holiday season, but all year long, for this tremendous support.

We wish everyone a prosperous New Year!

High Fashion Support for Foster Youth at Annual Vintage Chanel Event

A cool winter evening and a new local area hot spot was the place to be on December 19th for our annual Vintage Chanel and Designer Trunk Show to benefit Promises2Kids.

For the second year in a row, Christine Samoylov from Designer Vault donated proceeds from unique, hard-to-find Chanel accessories and handbags to Promises2Kids. This year to add to the festivities, joining her was Michele Arthur and Gracie Mahvi, with an exclusive first look of the Trouble & Strive Clothing Company, and Leslie Fastlicht Russo and her beautiful jewelry creations from LFR designs, all local area companies as well.

Taking advantage of our enviable weather, 50 of our loyal supporters looking for that perfect last minute gift for someone special (or themselves) enjoyed a hosted reception and some holiday shopping alfresco at the new La Jolla hotspot, The LOT. The atmosphere had the feel of a wonderful outdoor boutique with large fire pits, roving models in beautiful clothes, and local neighbors popping in and out to scout the merchandise on their way to dinner or a movie. After the event, many gathered in the lounge to toast our success and celebrate the holidays with friends. By the end of the night, more than \$3,000 was raised for foster children! Thanks to Board Member and past chair Deborah Marengo for helping to arrange all the vendors and to everyone who made the event so wonderful.

Bill Swansen: Mentor Brightening Futures!

Promises2Kids would not be able to serve San Diego foster youth without the support of volunteers, and we would like to recognize and thank a special key volunteer, Bill Swansen. Bill volunteers countless hours directly supporting the foster youth we serve and the growth of the foundation.

Bill sits on the Camp Connect work group and the Guardian Scholars scholarship committee. He attends the monthly Camp Connect events, supports high school students in Guardian Scholars, and even mentors young men pursuing higher education individually and through the Men's Leadership Network – a component of Guardian Scholars.

Through Bill's mentoring, he provides each foster youth with the support and consistency they need to overcome the obstacles they face. The youth find a role model, confidant, and advisor in Bill. Without volunteers like him, Promises2Kids would not be able to do what it does, and because of Bill's time and effort, the foster youth are on a path toward a brighter future.

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Elks Holiday Fundraiser Benefits Promises2Kids



The holidays were made a little bit brighter for San Diego foster youth thanks to the generosity of the ten county Elks Lodges. Spearheaded by Lori Foley and the other members of the Poway Elks Lodge #2543, local area lodges held a contest to see which lodge could collect the most gift cards for the annual Give From Your Heart holiday gift drive. When the contest was over, they had collected \$2,400 in gift cards and the Poway Lodge provided a \$2,000 grant for a total of \$4,550! In addition, Exalted Ruler Kevin Farrell and his wife Linda led a team of ten members from the Poway Elks Lodge in volunteering at the warehouse counting, sorting and distributing gifts to our kids.

One of the most popular fraternal organizations in the country, Elks invest in their communities through programs that help children grow up healthy by undertaking projects that address unmet needs. A wonderful bond was forged between our two organizations and we are looking forward to what the future will hold!

Ways to Get Involved and Help Make a Brighter Future Today

We have many rewarding volunteer opportunities; which include fun outlets such as hosting a community drive to bring awareness to our cause and projects serving youths, to other avenues such as community speaking and administrative support. No matter your volunteer interests, we have something for everyone. Contact Eric@Promises2Kids.org for information.

If flexibility in time and effort are not on your side, we accept and are grateful for contributions. We're always touched when we receive contributions supporting our unique programs, which provide the crucial services needed by foster youth. Great ways to contribute include becoming a member of our Children's Circle, donating to our cause, or even including us in your estate plans.

For information, contact Andrea@Promises2Kids.org





PROMISES2KIDS

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Dream On

Save the Date
June 2016

Visit Promises2Kids.org for details.
Artist to be announced April.