

More Than A Mentor



Patty and Brooklyn

My name is Brooklyn Lopez, 21 years old, studying Business Administration- Accounting at San Diego State University, and I entered the foster care system at age 12 with about five different foster home placements and one sibling who I was separated from as a result.

The definition of a “mentor,” provided by the Oxford dictionary is, “an experienced and trusted advisor.” They are guides who point their mentees in the right direction, whether it be for personal or professional development. My mentor, provided by my Promises2Kids family, has been my everlasting staircase to the glorious parts of life that I have never experienced before.

Before becoming a Guardian Scholar with Promises2Kids, I was in a deep, dark place when referring to my mental state of mind. I had a two year old son, was in college full time, working

part-time, and dealing with my mother who had her intervals of alcoholism and drug addiction from the time that I was very little and it has now taken great affect on my two sons in this present day.

My mentor, Patty Ippolito, is the one who has fearlessly taken a step up to the shattered, rusted plate and has not only taken me, but my two sons and partner under her wing. Her love is endless and recurring. Everyday there is something new that weighs on my shoulders and brings me down, but Patty aka “Grammy” is always there to lean my head upon. Just calling her Grammy warms my heart indefinitely. I have never had a Grandma or Grandpa before, like those I see in the movies or out in public. I finally feel like I am part of a family and it is the best feeling in the universe.

— Brooklyn

Message from the CEO



Having a mentor is a critical part of any young person's life, especially for a foster child. Growing up, I had several people in my life, including my parents, extended family, coaches and teachers. All of whom I knew that I could turn to at any given time for advice and support.

Unfortunately this isn't the case for everyone. Foster youth don't have an adult figure they can count on in times of need, whether it's to help them figure out what classes to take, how to apply for a job, celebrate their successes or just to reassure them that everything will be okay.

Every Guardian Scholar student in our program is carefully matched with a mentor who is there to support and guide them as they pursue their goals. Each mentor volunteers their time, and many have even told me they feel that their lives are richer because of their mentorship to our youth.

As January is National Mentoring Month, please consider doing the same. You can be the difference. Sometimes, all they need is YOU – someone who will show up, show them that everything is going be okay and help turn their world right side up.

Tonya Torosian, MSW, CFRE
Chief Executive Officer
Promises2Kids

Promises2Kids continues to provide comfort and hope to more than 3,000 foster children in San Diego who cannot live safely at home. Each day we strive to create a brighter future for foster children in San Diego.

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A Brighter Holiday Season Thanks To You



What better way to end the year than for foster youth to celebrate with their peers and all who support them.

Promises2Kids kicked off the fall season with a Thanksgiving to remember. Over 170 guests including youth, their families, mentors, staff and community members came together at Marina Village for the Guardian Scholars Thanksgiving

Dinner. This has been a long standing tradition for Guardian Scholars as many do not have a family to celebrate with. The highlight of the evening was honoring founder, Norma Hirsh with a beautiful slideshow. This special night would not have been possible without the support from our generous sponsor ESET and the volunteers from Mattress Firm and National Charity League.



Our Guardian Scholars “Ugly Sweater” Holiday Party was held at the Del Mar Country Club on December 7th. Over 260 guests came in their festive attire and got competitive, as each table designated one individual who they decorated as a human tree. The night was filled with delicious bites, raffle items, prizes, arts and crafts. Because of the support from NortonLifeLock, we were able to make this event happen.



Younger foster youth also experienced the spirit of the holidays at THE LOT movie theatre, where they made gingerbread houses, took silly photos in the photo booth and had a gift exchange where each child received a gift that was chosen by their sibling. One young boy was very excited to unwrap his gift that revealed a remote control car, selected by his sibling who was thrilled and proud that his brother loved what he had picked out. In addition to gifts being exchanged that afternoon, hugs and smiles were exchanged that filled the room with joy!

A huge thank you to all of our sponsors for making the holidays extra special for local foster youth!

Volunteer Spotlight: Giovan Hernandez



Giovan first heard about Promises2Kids in 2013 and knew it was the perfect fit. Growing up in a household with a single parent who always supported him, he knew the

significance of having a support system. He always advocated for children and giving back was a way for him to do that.

"I want to be there to celebrate their successes with them, because they might not have that role model in their life. I learn from them and they learn from me. It's like nothing I ever imagined in a volunteer environment."

He first volunteered at his now favorite event – summer camp, where he enjoys seeing familiar faces and watching the kids grow year after year.

"I'm just as excited as the kids are. I see how resilient,

brilliant, brave, talented and fearless they are. At first there's so much apprehension and cautiousness, but then they come out of their shells, engage more and show you who they are."

Giovan has volunteered at every summer camp since then and has dedicated over 500 hours helping out at monthly Camp Connect activities, Guardian Scholar events, our Dream On concert gala and holiday shopping events.

He consistently shows up and shows foster children that he genuinely cares about them, enriching and making a difference in their lives.

Giovan, we are incredibly grateful for your positive energy, kindhearted and easygoing personality and selfless commitment to foster children. We are proud to have you as part of our Promises2Kids family. Thank you!

To become a volunteer, visit Promises2Kids.org or email Hilary@Promises2Kids.org.

ONLY A FEW DAYS LEFT to become a Champion for Youth!



Learn more and donate at
charity.centuryclubsd.org/Promises2Kids
Deadline: January 26th

Your Generosity Allows Siblings To Reconnect

Last month, local foster children had the opportunity to enjoy an overnight getaway in the beautiful city of Big Bear. For the majority, this was their very first time seeing snow. Needless to say, there was no shortage of snow angels, snowmen and snowball fights. The weekend was full of fun activities!



Siblings prepare to go tubing down the hill.

Nearly 40 foster children reunited with their brothers and sisters who they are separated from in foster care. These siblings rarely get to see each other, making camp so incredibly important. Throughout the year, they only have the opportunity to spend a few nights together.

The ultimate highlight was tubing; some even choosing to go down the hill with their siblings by tying their tubes together so that they could share that experience. They also went to the observatory, getting an up close look at the moon and stars through the telescope. The night ended with a dance, photobooth fun, board games and crafts for all!

Children also experienced archery, wall climbing and low ropes teambuilding activities. Although there were moments of frustration trying to accomplish the goal, the looks on their faces while relying on each other and accomplish a difficult goal together was priceless. They were incredibly proud of themselves for finishing the task, and more importantly, doing so with their siblings.

Among the vast number of exciting moments that weekend, one fearless little girl showed everyone the true meaning of persistence. While wall climbing, eight year old Zoe didn't make it up the big wall her first try, but she continued to practice on the small wall and went back and forth between the walls until she was finally able to make it to the top of the big wall. Her older brother and sisters were there to cheer her on the entire time and proud to witness their little sister succeed. Zoe believed in herself and never gave up.



Siblings on the low ropes.

It's because of kind supporters like you, we are able to host Camp Connect events so that foster children can rebuild their relationships with one another, create lifelong memories and just have fun being kids!

Meet Our Promise Makers

“I am a
Promise Maker
because every
child deserves
to be safe,
feel wanted
and loved.”

Tonya Torosian
Chief Executive
Officer



I am excited to share this awareness campaign with the community. “I am a Promise Maker” is a campaign to raise awareness of foster care and engage community support by sharing personal stories of inspiration from foster youth supporters. We started this campaign with a few members of our Board but over the next year, each quarter, will be adding new stories from our supporters, staff, mentors, volunteers and even from our youth!

I am humbled by the stories shared thus far, and I hope you see the difference one person can make in the life

of a child – read, share and pledge your support of foster youth by joining our Promise Makers monthly giving club. If you too want to share your inspiration, send me an email at Tonya@Promises2Kids.org – I would love to hear from you. Who knows, your story may be featured in the coming months!

Tonya Torosian – Promise Maker and CEO of Promises2Kids

Visit Promises2Kids.org to read their stories about why they are proud to be Promise Makers.



"As a Board Member, I have seen the impact of our foster youths' successes; receiving an education, feeling a sense of belonging, and self-worth. I am proud to be part of an organization that is making a difference in the lives of foster youth."

Rob Pedersen
Board of Directors
Chair



"As a parent, we have been fortunate enough to provide our kids with their every need. On the other hand, foster youth experience things that most of us couldn't fathom, yet they try so hard to overcome these obstacles. Every child deserves an opportunity to flourish, grow, and to have joy in their lives!"

Merrilee Neal
Board Member

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"At a young age, I was introduced to the horrors of child abuse through my mother's profession as a public health nurse. My mother's commitment to helping these children sparked a passion in me to continue her legacy. When I was a new mother, I founded the Child Abuse Prevention Foundation to help children who were victims throughout San Diego County."

Norma Hirsh
Founder Emeritus



"I would do anything to change the fateful day I lost my little sister. While her death was devastating, it ignited a fire inside of me to assist children who have been separated from their siblings. Today, Promises2Kids embodies the pledge I have made to help at-risk children stay connected to their siblings and get the support they need to have brighter futures."

Danielle Humphries
Board of Directors
Secretary



"I suffered from many types of abuse growing up. I now have a passion to help youth who have had difficult childhoods as well. I became one of the founders after hearing about the shocking statistics and knew I had to help at risk children so they can have a better chance to succeed."

Renée Comeau
Founder Emeritus

The Power Of A Peer Mentor

"It's important to be a Youth2Youth mentor to show youth a better way to live and help them through their mistakes and fears."

– Brianna McClory

"It's important to be a Youth2Youth peer mentor because the kids we work with need someone that they can rely on and trust to always be there when they need someone."

– Bo Kaimuloa

"Being a part of the Youth2Youth program provides an example for the children at the Polinsky Children's Center; it shows them that there is a light at the end of the tunnel by setting an example based on our experiences, be it at Polinsky or any form of our foster youth experience. I have had many amazing experiences with the kids at Polinsky, and one of my favorite memory was hearing a youth say "I'll leave this with him, I trust him". The kids teach me as much as I teach them."

– Irving Chavez

"Every day I go to work I know that I have the ability to help a child who is placed in Polinsky. Being a mentor has changed my life. I love my job and I am very thankful that Promises2Kids allows me to give back. I am grateful to work for such a wonderful organization!"

– Claudia Mata

"I love being a Youth2Youth because it allows me to connect with kids who grew up like me and gives me the opportunity to use my power to empower them. I'm really open about what I went through to get to where I am now and I do that so they know how possible it is not only to survive this stage, but that they can thrive beyond this chapter in their life. I try to remind them that change starts with us and it's not what happened to us, but what happened for us. I feel as though I'm the one that benefits from Youth2Youth by how much I'm inspired by the youth I work with."

– Tiffani Hamilton



Youth2Youth is an amazing program because it speaks from lived experience. So many people who support youth in foster care are empathetic to the unfortunate situations of our teenage youth but they do not understand the daily expenses of living in a system. Peer mentors can encourage foster youth to overcome their past and remind them that anything is possible because they did it.

– Rashida Elimu, Guardian Scholars Supervisor

Youth2Youth is a peer mentoring program that utilizes Promises2Kids Guardian Scholars as mentors to youth living in foster care.

The Difference One Can Make



One bighearted community member and his family made the holidays brighter for nearly 1,000 foster youth across San Diego this past December, providing 100% of the funds for our annual holiday shopping event.

Foster youth ten and up were given the opportunity to

shop at Costco and Walmart, selecting gifts for themselves and their loved ones. One girl made her caregiver stand near the exit while she checked out, ensuring that the gift she bought would not be seen. Another youth stated, *"I've been blessed with this opportunity, so I bought a little something for those who have supported me. 'Tis the season to share with others. That's what this time of year is all about."*

One by one, foster youth checked items off their lists and left the stores with big smiles, full carts and grateful hearts!

Thank you for giving us hope during the holidays and able to get something we want for Christmas. I really am thankful for what you have done you brought me joy and hope during this month when I'm not able to see my brothers.

Your Kindness Changes Lives



Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of the San Diego community, Promises2Kids hosted the 26th Annual *BOMA Give From Your Heart* holiday gift drive, presented by Carmel Mountain Preschool. Foster children experienced the magic of the holidays as they had gifts to open and call their own.

Nearly 25,000 gifts and \$8,000 in gift cards were donated for foster youth, from bikes, scooters and skateboards, to Barbie dolls and toy trucks, to gift cards to popular retailers for the older ones.

Caregivers and social workers were ecstatic to see the array of items that they could choose from and were beyond grateful for the opportunity to select items for each child. They could not wait to see the looks on the children's faces as they knew how happy they would be, especially if they found a gift that they had specifically asked for.

We could not be more appreciative for the amazing support from those who made this possible once again: BOMA (Building Owners and Managers Association), Carmel Mountain Preschool, Boyer Moving & Storage, Waste Management, KUSI News and Manulife Investment Management.

A special thank you to the volunteers and everyone who donated. Your kindness helped bring joy to over 3,000 deserving foster children!

Corporate Spotlight: ESET

Since 2016, ESET has been a huge supporter of Promises2Kids. The company and its employees have championed foster youth in countless ways, providing the necessary tools and opportunities for foster youth to achieve their higher education and also helping brothers and sisters living apart in foster care spend time together every month.

As a comprehensive corporate partner, they have provided a scholarship for a student, sponsored the Women in Technology workshop at our Education Summit, our annual Thanksgiving dinner for foster youth, assembled hundreds of care packages for college students and hosted a group of students onsite for a career exploration event. ESET has also provided cyber security training and

software, and supported our *Dream On* Concert Gala, presented by Kevin and Raegan Prior.

Thank you to the entire ESET team for your continued support and for investing in the futures of foster youth! Year after year, your support continues to change lives for the better. We could not do what we do without community leaders like you!



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to our new Board Members



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Tee Off For A Cause



Cathy Oleksy, Lisa Corbosiero, Liz Cree & Colleen Guerra

This past fall, Promises2Kids hosted its annual *FORE KIDS Golf Tournament and Spa Event*, presented by Jeannie and Arthur Rivkin, at the Fairmont Grand Del Mar.

Nearly 100 players participated, and the top three teams from the tournament are competing in this month's *7th Annual Randy Jones Invitational*.

Our first ever "Helicopter Ball Drop", sponsored by Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani LLP, took place with 839 balls being dropped on the 18th green at the stunning Grand Golf Club. Mark Kertenian, a first time golfer in the tournament was our lucky winner who walked away with the \$5,000 cash prize!

Guardian Scholar Joseph closed out the evening by sharing his journey in foster care, and how he transitioned to adulthood.

While the majority of attendees came out for a fabulous day of golf, others spent a rejuvenating day at the spa as they enjoyed a hosted lunch and champagne bar, while being pampered with facials and massages, and having all day access to the fitness center, sauna and relaxation pool.



Bob Gustafson, Bob Salt, Bob Harris & Mike Schultz



Sean Doheny, Michael Corbosiero, Ray Ellis & Greg Parise



Mark Kertenian, Alfonso Entebi, CA Marengo & Julian Kapchinskiy

Thank you to everyone who helped make this event a success! Your support is helping us create a brighter future for foster children all across San Diego.

SAVE THE DATE and join us on September 22nd for our 2020 event!

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Dream On 2020 CONCERT GALA

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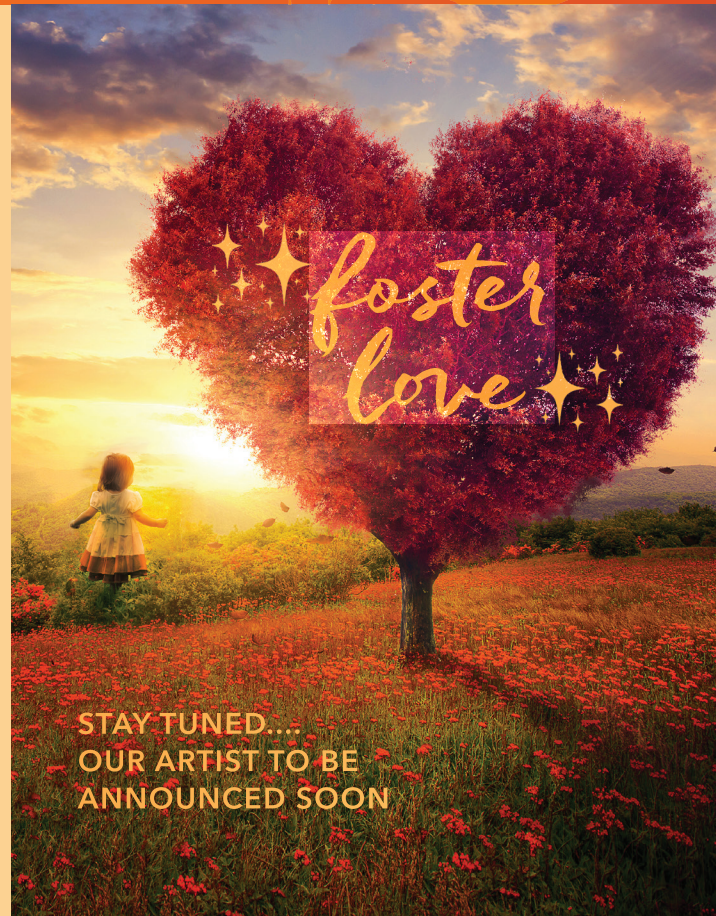
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Happy New Year

Promises2Kids Staff



From all of us at Promises2Kids!