

# FULFILLING PROMISES

*Creating a brighter future for foster children®*

## It All Started With A Dream Of Three People

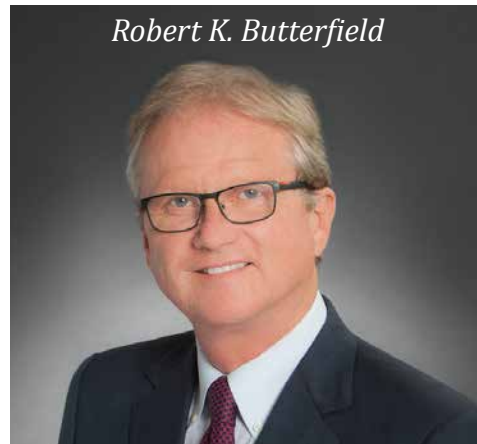
Norma Hirsh



Renée Comeau



Robert K. Butterfield



This year marks the 40th anniversary of Promises2Kids, originally founded in 1981 as the Child Abuse Prevention Foundation.

It all started with a simple wish - ensuring children are safe, happy and loved. Three remarkable local San Diegans took that dream and transformed it into an organization that has supported over 200,000 abused and neglected children in our community. Norma Hirsh, Renée Comeau, and Robert K. Butterfield started this 40 years ago and proved that anyone can make a difference.

Norma Hirsh volunteered at the Hillcrest Receiving Home, which was old, overcrowded and as she described, not warm and comforting to children who had just experienced severe trauma. She felt that children who had already experienced the unimaginable, deserved a safe haven. Norma, Renée and Rob set a path to better the lives of children in foster care and from this common goal, a unique public private partnership was created. Together, with the County of San Diego and many individual supporters, Promises2Kids built the

A. B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center - an emergency shelter for abused and neglected children. To date, the Center has cared for over 60,000 children.

Over the years, Promises2Kids has been at the forefront of foster care related issues, leading efforts including collaboratively building San Pasqual Academy, the creation of one centralized Child Abuse Hotline, training and coordinating first responders on responding to child abuse cases, reuniting siblings separated in foster care, and providing education support for current and former foster youth.

Our mission of *creating a brighter future for foster children®* would not be possible without the passion and dedication of three kindhearted and philanthropic community leaders who took a stand 40 years ago and did what had to be done. Thank you to Norma, Renée and Rob for all that they have done, and continue to do for foster children. Today, they continue as Founder Emeritus Members of the Board. Their endless and overwhelming support has truly made a difference!

# Message from the CEO



Coming off such a difficult year, it's important to remember that connections matter and that a community is so critical, especially during this trying time. Together, we have accomplished so much over 40 years and it's

imperative that we unite as a community to continue meeting the needs of foster children. Since the start of the pandemic, their needs have increased and our support is needed more than ever before. We've come a long way, but there's still plenty of work to be done.

We've accomplished incredible things including the creation of a centralized Child Abuse Hotline; building our community's emergency shelter; raising funds to build a residential high school for foster youth; providing mentors, scholarships and resources to help foster youth complete their higher education; and reuniting siblings living apart in foster care each month, who otherwise would not have the opportunity to reconnect.

Through continued leadership, volunteering, mentoring, giving and advocacy, much more can be accomplished.

Thank you to everyone who has stepped up to help brighten their lives. Our work is not possible without you. I hope that you'll continue to join us in our efforts to show that we are here to support them, and that there are people who genuinely care and want to see them beat the odds, flourish and succeed.

**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.*

## Board Of Directors

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Manchester Financial Group, VP, Marketing & Public Relations

**Vivianne Villanueva Dhupa, Immediate Past Chair**

Community Volunteer

**Merrilee Neal, Vice Chair**

Community Volunteer

**Don Duford, Treasurer**

San Diego Social Venture Partners, Chair

**Danielle Humphries, Secretary**

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**Jeffrey Strauss**, Pamplemousse Grille, Executive Chef & Owner

**Tonya Torosian**, Promises2Kids, Chief Executive Officer

**Paul Zamora**, ICW Group Insurance Companies, SVP,

Workers Compensation

**Dana Zhang**, Ambrix Inc., Vice President and Head of Finance

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**Rob Butterfield**, Butterfield Schechter, LLP, Partner

**Renée Comeau**, Community Volunteer

**Norma Hirsh**, Community Volunteer

### EMERITUS

**Bob Duggan**, Marc-Aaron Realtors, Owner

**Jackson Goodall**, Jack-In-The-Box, Inc., Chairman, Retired

**Craig Irving**, The Irving Group, Principal

**Honorable Lawrence Irving**, Retired

**Honorable James R. Milliken**, Judge of the Superior Court, Retired

**Jeannie & Arthur Rivkin**, R Group Management Corp., Owners

# The Positive Impact of a Mentor

Sabrina entered foster care at five years old and has always felt a need for connection.

Through Guardian Scholars, she has a mentor, Elise. Consistency, positive energy and honesty brought them together, and they have built trust over time. Together they enjoy hiking, going to the beach, eating out and sharing their love for dogs.



“Elise is more than a mentor, she’s my friend. She cares for me and keeps it real. She goes the extra mile without overstepping, and never expects anything in return. She encourages me to be the best version of myself, gives great advice and assures me that everything is going to be okay,” said Sabrina.

During this current pandemic, Elise sent Sabrina a goodie bag when she was sick, gave her a Christmas gift, often mails her beautifully handmade postcards to let her know she is thought of, and most importantly, regularly checks in.

“What youth need is someone to be there for them. It’s a rewarding experience on both ends. I love having Sabrina around. She’s like a friend to me and I enjoy learning from her. I like being able to help, but she’s also done a lot for me too,” shared Elise.

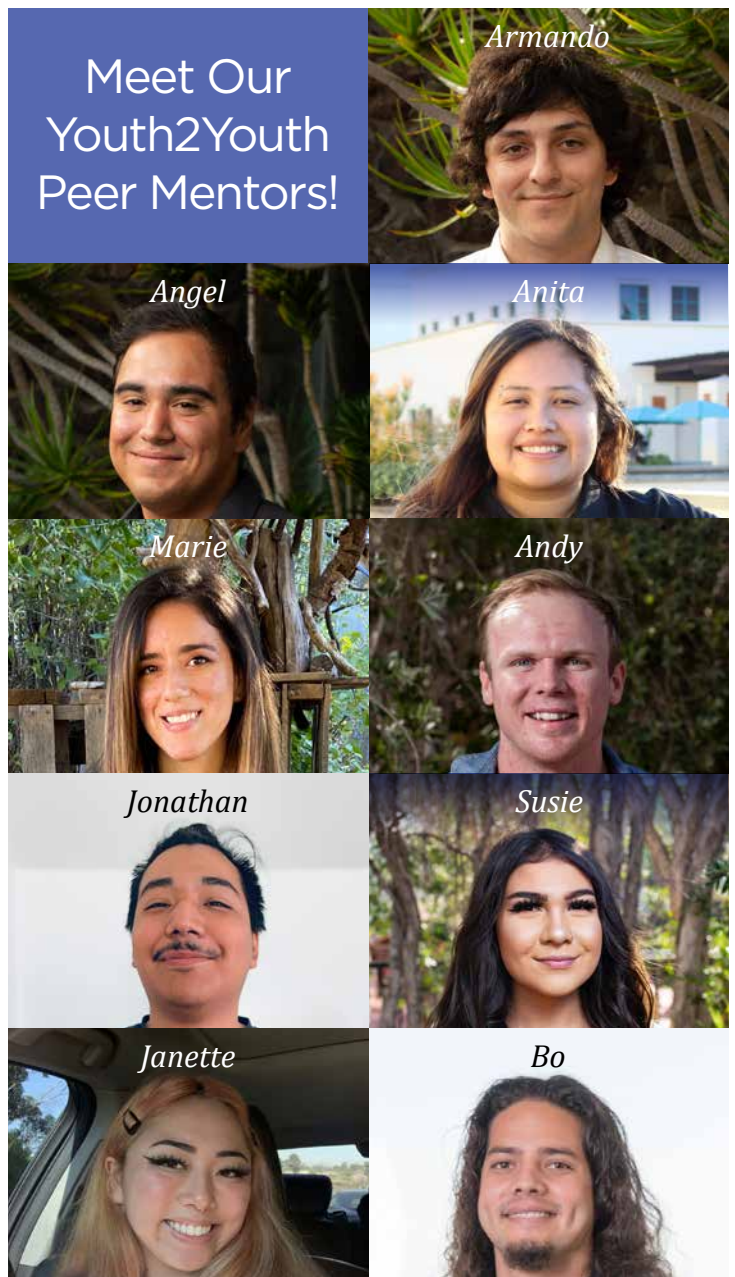
Today Sabrina is in her 3rd year at San Diego State University, pursuing her bachelor’s degree in Child and Family Development.

***If you’re interested in making a positive impact in a young person’s life as a mentor, email [Hilary@Promises2Kids.org](mailto:Hilary@Promises2Kids.org).***

# Peer Mentors Making A Difference

Youth2Youth is a peer mentoring program that utilizes Promises2Kids Guardian Scholars as mentors to youth currently living in foster care. Former foster youth are able to speak from lived experience, so they are able to better understand and communicate with current foster youth. As mentors, they are there to help current foster youth overcome their past and inspire them to change their lives for the better. They are proof that beating the odds is very much possible and that with the right support, guidance and opportunities, a brighter future most definitely exists.

## Meet Our Youth2Youth Peer Mentors!





# Spreading Holiday Cheer

One philanthropic community member and his family made the holidays brighter for nearly 900 foster youth across San Diego this holiday season. All who participated shopped on Amazon for \$250-\$350 worth of gifts for themselves and their loved ones. We typically host 900 foster youth in person shopping at local stores. However this year, we needed to shift to online shopping. We utilized volunteers to secure shopping lists from youth, process them online with Amazon, and had the gifts delivered to each youth.

Foster youth were happy to have the opportunity to check items off their lists! This showed them how much they are cared for, loved and remembered around the holidays.

Popular items included cell phones, AirPods, makeup, nail sets, slime, Anime, Nintendo Switches, tablets and Lego.

A big thank you to all of the volunteers, and to the bighearted community member and their family who once again made all of this possible!



## Your Generosity Brightened Lives

Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of the San Diego community, Promises2Kids hosted the Annual BOMA Give From Your Heart holiday gift drive, presented by Carmel Mountain Preschool. The Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) has been a longtime partner, putting on the gift drive for 27 years.

This year, Carmel Mountain Preschool also held their inaugural socially distant drive-thru Holiday Giving Parade. Complete with a Santa visit, they safely brought holiday cheer to the community with their innovative, creative and beautiful event. Through this, they reached their goal of collecting 1,000 gifts.

Overall, 10,247 gifts were collected and \$8,690 was raised to help make the holidays a little brighter for local foster children. From bikes and scooters, to electronic games and gift cards to popular retailers, there was something for every child to enjoy! Popular items this year included:

Baby Yoda, baby dolls, beauty products, fuzzy bathrobes, wireless headphones, Lego and Duplo.

Caregivers and social workers were thrilled to see the selection of items that they could choose from and were beyond grateful for the opportunity to select items for each child.

We could not be more appreciative for the amazing support from those who made this possible once again: BOMA, Carmel Mountain Preschool, Boyer Moving & Storage, Waste Management, CBS 8 and Manulife Investment Management. A special thank you to the volunteers and everyone who donated.

Because of support from people like you, foster children experienced the magic of the holidays as they had gifts to open and call their own. Your kindness helped bring joy to over 3,000 deserving foster children and made this a holiday season to remember!



# Special Deliveries That You Made Possible

While this year may have looked different and we were unable to host our in-person Thanksgiving dinner and Holiday party, that did not stop us from celebrating with our Guardian Scholars.

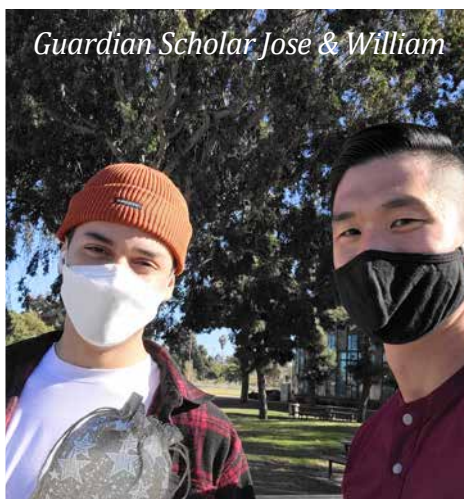
To celebrate Thanksgiving, and give the youth the opportunity to have a dinner of their own, safely at home, each student received a basket filled with decorations, recipes and a \$100 Vons gift card. They were hand delivered by their mentors and Promises2Kids Board Members. It was just the personal touch our students needed.

When it came time to plan the Holiday Party, we decided to host our first-ever Virtual Holiday Party. The theme was ugly masks, ugly sweaters, and pajamas! Guests enjoyed playing fun virtual games

and pizza was delivered to all of those in attendance.

Immediately following the party, our mentors, coaches, Board Members, volunteers and supporters set out to deliver a holiday gift to each student. The cozy holiday care package was filled with winter items, including a mug, hot cocoa, warm socks and a \$350 Amazon gift card generously provided by an anonymous donor. We mailed this to our out-of-county students. These wonderful baskets brought so much joy to a lonely holiday, given the renewed stay at home order.

Promises2Kids is incredibly grateful for all of the mentors, Board Members, coaches and volunteers who delivered these special packages! YOU are the reason why foster youth know how much the community truly cares for them.





## Volunteer Spotlight: Cathy Carruthers



Cathy started her journey as a volunteer three years ago. Charitable causes for children are dear to Cathy's heart and she has always wanted to uplift the next generation.

Foster children have taught her not to sweat the small stuff and to find joy in the little things. They inspire her, much like she inspires them.

From volunteering at Camp Connect events and our *Dream On* concert gala, to taking on a Lead Volunteer role at our holiday gift drive, Cathy always steps up whenever and wherever there is a need. She never hesitates to go the extra mile.

"The joy on their faces warms my heart and their smiles make my day. Siblings are so happy to see each other and to watch them wrap their arms around each other when they reunite is priceless," says Cathy.

Cathy just signed up to be a mentor to a Guardian Scholar. Having a son of her own, she can't imagine someone transitioning from high school to college without a positive adult role model in their life.

"The more you give and help others, the more you get back. It takes so little to make someone else happy and in the process you make the world a little better," she shared.

Cathy, thank you for all that you do to help better the lives of foster children! You give them hope for a brighter tomorrow.

**To become a volunteer, contact:  
[Hilary@Promises2Kids.org](mailto:Hilary@Promises2Kids.org)  
or visit [Promises2Kids.org](https://Promises2Kids.org).**

## Reconnected Thanks to Your Support



Ivy(16) and Kya(14) have been in foster care most of their lives and have been separated almost the entire time. They both have special needs, often making it difficult to bring them together but nothing could stop them from doing so to celebrate a very important day.

During a recent visit to celebrate Ivy's birthday, the sisters enjoyed sandwiches and their favorite Hot Cheetos together. Kya happily watched Ivy open her presents, including the one she picked out – an art box. Ivy mentioned how excited she was to show it off to everyone. Ivy also opened up a gift of black slime that she happily shared with Kya, suggesting that she mix the purple color in as well. To top off their afternoon visit and celebrate the birthday girl, low carb ice cream was brought for Ivy, who suffers from diabetes.

Moments like this are not taken for granted by children in foster care. They too often are separated from siblings and do not get the opportunity to spend special days together. When they are brought together through Camp Connect, it means so much more than just the activity at hand. It means family, connection and love.

Ivy and Kya look forward to connecting again next month! It's because of kindhearted people like you, that we are able to reunite siblings living apart in foster care. Thank you for your support!

## Corporate Spotlight: California Coast Credit Union

California Coast Credit Union has been a long standing partner of Promises2Kids since 2012, when they joined our annual holiday gift drive.

In addition to their generous financial support to help meet students' needs during the holiday season, they are a comprehensive corporate partner. They supported high school students by sponsoring the annual Education Summit, taught Guardian Scholars about financial literacy and presented on the importance of financial planning to the young participants in our Women's Leadership Network.

Most recently, they made their online resource center accessible to all Guardian Scholars. The center provides financial wellness tools and resources, along with budgeting and financial coaching; which are normally reserved for members of their Credit Union.

A big thanks to California Coast Credit Union for investing in the futures of foster youth! Each year, their support continues to better the lives of young people.



## Welcome \_\_\_\_\_ to our new Board Members



**Emily Green Lake**  
Sisters Pizza  
Owner



**Lisa Matich**  
Tegna Inc. and CBS 8  
Regional Finance  
Director



**Mia Park**  
Ranch & Coast  
Magazine  
Editor-in-Chief



**Dana Zhang**  
Ambrx, Inc.  
Vice President and  
Head of Finance

We are so  
**happy**  
we get to spend  
time together  
again

QUINN &  
ALESHA



**PROMISES2KIDS HAS BEEN  
CREATING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR  
FOSTER CHILDREN FOR 40 YEARS.  
WE'VE COME A LONG WAY, BUT  
THERE'S STILL LOTS TO DO!**

Make a difference by showing foster children you care. YOU can be their hope and help change their lives for the better!

Your gift will ensure that siblings living apart will have fun opportunities to reconnect each month; foster youth will have the guidance, skills and resources to complete their higher education; foster children can enjoy the same extracurricular activities as their peers; and they can feel safe in their surroundings.

**Visit [Promises2Kids.org](https://Promises2Kids.org) and donate today!**

#### SIGNATURE PROGRAMS

##### CAMP CONNECT

Brothers and sisters living apart in foster care have been reunited 2,041 times.

##### GUARDIAN SCHOLARS

739 high school and college students have been supported in reaching their educational goals.

##### FOSTER FUNDS

17,702 youth have received birthday gifts, school clothes and opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.

##### A.B. & JESSIE POLINSKY CHILDREN'S CENTER

Approximately 60,000 children have been cared for at the Polinsky Children's Center.

