

## Sisters Stick Together



This spring, 53 Camp Connect youth visited Universal Studios for a day of movie magic to play and let their imaginations run free!

With the entire park to explore, there was something for everyone. Some headed straight to Mario World where siblings could race each other on the new Mario Kart ride, while others went to Harry Potter World to cast spells on each other. The Mummy and Jurassic Park rides were popular with the older groups, while the little ones enjoyed meeting classic characters like Scooby Doo and riding the Minions ride.

Two siblings along for the day were Rachel (19) & Abby (15). They entered care in 2018 due to abuse and neglect. They were separated into different homes in 2019, and started attending Camp Connect so they could see each other regularly.

They had just finished soaring through the Harry Potter ride when Abby noticed something was

wrong. As they exited the ride, she realized her prescription glasses were gone! She started to panic, checking their bags, and finding nothing. Abby realized that the glasses had slipped out of her pocket during the ride. They retraced their steps, but no luck. Rachel's protective instincts kicked in. Her sister can't see without the glasses, and their day looked to be ruined.

Rachel approached a ride worker and described the situation and the glasses. While employees went to search, Rachel stuck with her younger sister, calming her down and assuring her they would find a solution. She helped her sister relax and remain patient as the employees looked throughout the ride. After a short time, their patience was rewarded, and the glasses were returned. Rachel replaced the glasses on Abby's face and the two of them walked off to the next ride hand in hand.

Theme parks like Universal Studios are where we make special, lifelong memories. Thanks to supporters like you, siblings like Rachel and Abby can be there for each other and share memories like these together.



# Message From The CEO



This May we are once again honoring National Foster Care Month and celebrating all the current and former foster youth in our community. Despite the trauma they experienced that led to them being in foster care, these children have been

resilient and inspire me and Promises2Kids to continue to ensure all their needs are met.

I am tremendously grateful for everything that our community has done to help foster children in need.

What is most critical for any child is a sense of connection; connection between them and their brothers and sisters, a positive adult mentor, a caring foster parent, their peers, and the community.

With your support we were able to build the foundations for these relationships and support the youth as they develop them into a true feeling of connection.... to their siblings, to our staff, our volunteers, and the community.

National Foster Care Month – a time to reflect and look back at all that we have accomplished together to support foster children; however, it's also a time for us to reevaluate to see what more we can do. There is still a long road ahead of us.

We need everyone's support to continue to build community for these children. If you can volunteer, donate, or support our events, please visit our website - you can be the difference for a child today.

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

*Promises2Kids continues to provide comfort and hope to nearly 3,000 current and former 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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## Meet Guardian Scholar, Elisabeth!

The years I spent growing up in foster care were the worst years of my life. I still have nightmares about my time in care. This is why it's beautiful that I found the determination to go on; I had every reason to give up, but I didn't and I am beyond proud of myself for that.

I always had a love for drawing and painting, and after foster care I was able to get a hold of my love for art and grow my skills. I now have a social media presence where I use my art to represent my culture as a Mexican American and use it to bring light to other minority groups.

I am also proudly furthering my education as a first-generation college student and currently working on my Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice at SDSU. This is one of many things I do to better myself, and ensure I am healing and giving myself a brighter future.

Promises2Kids has presented many opportunities and has supported me in different stages of my life. They have taught me useful skills through groups like the Women's Leadership Network and Advocates for Change. They have also connected me with a mentor and coordinator who provide me with support and resources when I need them most.

*— Elisabeth*

## Pinwheels For Prevention

Each week, an average of 400 investigations of alleged child abuse and neglect are assigned in San Diego County.

In honor of National Child Abuse Prevention Month in April, supporters purchased blue pinwheels through our Pinwheels for Prevention campaign to bring attention to the issue of child abuse. Over 400 pinwheels were planted to help create San Diego's Pinwheels for Prevention Garden on the lawn at the San Diego County Administration Center. A press conference then took place in conjunction with the County of San Diego, County Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Nora Vargas, and San Diego County Child and Family Well-Being Director Kimberly Giardina, to raise awareness about the need to prevent child abuse. Attendees also heard inspiring words from Promises2Kids CEO Tonya Torosian, former foster youth and Guardian Scholar Makayla Scott, and longtime foster parent Mary Ann Pascal. A special thank you to all for making this day possible!

We also grateful for our Prevention Partners: California Coast Credit Union, San Diego Foundation, SDGE, Andrew & Kristen Ruiz, Jack Green, Marissa Parks, and Thor Eakes, CPA.

If you were unable to join, but would still like to show your support of child abuse prevention, please consider volunteering or mentoring a youth through Promises2Kids, or becoming a foster parent or respite provider through the County of San Diego. It's never too late!



## Your Support Helped James Thrive



James (3) entered care at age 2, after being removed from his parents due to neglect. He had a history of prenatal exposure to drugs, medical challenges, limited speech and social skills, and was triggered by any raised voices.

After living in 5 different homes, James arrived at the A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center. His extreme behaviors consisted of uncontrollable outbursts of anger and frustration, and self-harming behaviors, such as hitting and holding his breath.

James was fast-tracked into KidSTART services and through an evaluation, he was diagnosed with adjustment disorder and delay in development. With the help from his Care Coordinator, James was quickly connected to services, began to make progress in his development, and his behavior became much more stable. Once his circle of support learned how to better address his needs, his behaviors and self-harm began to decrease.

His new caregivers were very grateful to have this support, helping James transition smoothly into their home. He also began attending preschool, where he learned to socialize with other children and learned classroom etiquette. James was connected to school services, has maintained his mental health services, and has continued attending his medical appointments.

You are the reason why foster children like James can receive services they need to be healthy and happy.

## Youth Finds Her Voice Thanks To You



Kendra (7) entered care at age 1 when the environment with her biological parents became unsafe for her to live in, experiencing severe neglect and abuse. Given her background, her caregiver is dedicated to giving her as many opportunities as possible and surrounding her with positive influences.

Kendra's caregiver first realized her love for music when she took Kendra to Disneyland and saw her singing and dancing to a mariachi band. Once Kendra reached the age requirement for her local singing studio, her caregiver reached out to Promises2Kids, and through the Something Special Fund, Kendra's request was granted to begin lessons.

Kendra was ecstatic when she found out her request was granted! She has since joined the children's choir, where she has excelled and has even done multiple solos. The children's choir has taught her how to find her voice, work together with her peers, and most importantly it has boosted her self-esteem. Kendra has found a sense of pride in being a part of the choir, and once she is old enough, she will be joining the mariachi band at her music studio!

Because of your generosity, foster children like Kendra have the opportunity to explore their interests and participate in the same activities as their peers.

*For confidentiality purposes, stock photos were used on this page.*

PROMISES2KIDS



SUPPORT FOSTER CHILDREN & RESTAURANTS

MAY is NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE for San Diego foster children through Guardian Scholars, Camp Connect, Foster Funds & the A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center

VISIT OUR GENEROUS RESTAURANT PARTNERS MAY 1-31

20 | TWENTY



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# Springtime Fun At Fashion Valley Mall

This past March, nearly 40 foster youth and their caregivers had the opportunity to meet the Easter Bunny and enjoy a fun-filled day at Fashion Valley Mall.

They checked in at the bunny station, and although some of the littlest were star-struck about meeting the bunny, the photos perfectly captured their excitement. Neiman Marcus provided arts and crafts for the youth, along with a coffee bar for the adults, while they patiently waited for their turn.

Afterwards, youth visited Build-A-Bear where they created and customized their very own stuffed animal.

The older youth also challenged themselves at Red Door Escape Room and by working together, they were out in no time!

The event wrapped up with a delicious meal provided by Blanco Cocina + Cantina, where everyone sat down for a taco lunch, complete with beans, rice, chips and salsa.

A very special thank you to all who made this unforgettable day possible – Fashion Valley Mall, Neiman Marcus, Blanco Cocina + Cantina, Build-A-Bear, Red Door Escape Room, and Cherry Hill Programs. We are grateful for all the friendly and welcoming staff and volunteers who made sure the day was perfect!



## Volunteer With Promises2Kids

From mentoring a former foster youth, to providing administrative support, to helping at Camp Connect or fundraising events, the volunteer opportunities are endless!

Plus, it's a great way to meet new friends, give back to our community, and learn new skills.

Individual and Corporate Volunteers are both welcome.

Email [Jenn@Promises2Kids.org](mailto:Jenn@Promises2Kids.org) to learn more.

# A Night To Remember

Volunteer Appreciation Month this past April reached its peak with an awards reception hosted at Bali Hai restaurant. The event was well attended by volunteers who were invited to relax and reflect on the impact they have made on San Diego's foster youth. It was a special time to celebrate the amazing dedication of all our volunteers throughout the year.

While taking in the San Diego skyline over the bay, attendees exchanged stories and reminisced about their experiences as volunteers.

Guardian Scholars from our Advocates for Change group were also present to speak with volunteers and express their gratitude.

Promises2Kids CEO Tonya Torosian and Volunteer Manager Jenn Belgarde thanked volunteers for their time and presented the following awards to

recognize the outstanding contributions of several individuals and corporations. Congratulations to all!

- Camp Connect Volunteer of the Year - Lee Otto
- Rookie Volunteer of the Year - Femke Munting
- Mentor of the Year - Michelle Rosenberg
- Volunteer of the Year - Monica Hill
- Corporate Volunteer of the Year - ICW Group
- Impact Awards - SDGE, ESET, LexisNexis Risk Solutions, & UPS
- Outstanding Youth Volunteers of the Year - National Charity League (NCL) and Teen Volunteers in Action (TVIA)

Together, we are creating a brighter future for foster children. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, visit [Promises2Kids.org](http://Promises2Kids.org) or email [Jenn@Promises2Kids.org](mailto:Jenn@Promises2Kids.org).



## Promises2Kids Gains National Recognition

We are thrilled to share that Promises2Kids was selected to receive the FBI Director's Community Leadership Award.

Our CEO Tonya Torosian and COO Stephanie Ortega recently met with Assistant Special Agent in Charge - San Diego, John Kim, at the FBI San Diego Field Office where they were presented with a certificate and thanked for their community service in preparation for their trip to D.C.

The special award was later presented by FBI Director Christopher Wray, in Washington D.C. at the FBI Headquarters during their Annual Director's Community Leadership Awards Ceremony. This honors organizations and individuals who are doing the hard work of improving their communities. This recognition would not have been possible without each and every one of you!

Thank you for your commitment to foster children in our community.



*Tonya and Stephanie meeting John Kim at the FBI San Diego Field Office*





# DreamOn

CONCERT GALA

PRESENTED BY  
**KEVIN & RAEGAN PRIOR**

JOIN PROMISES2KIDS FOR AN  
EXCLUSIVE EVENING OF DINNER, AN AUCTION,  
AND PRIVATE CONCERT UNDER THE STARS  
AT THE LA JOLLA  
ESTATE HOME OF JOAN WAITT

**MONDAY, SEPT. 18, 2023**

FEATURING ACCLAIMED RECORDING ARTIST

**DAUGHTRY**



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