



**CREATING A  
BRIGHTER  
FUTURE FOR  
FOSTER  
CHILDREN**  
FOR OVER 40 YEARS



PROMISES2KIDS



**TONYA TOROSIAN**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

*“With your support this past year, we have made a profound and lasting impact on the lives of foster children.”*

Our commitment has revolved around three pillars: education, mental well-being, and fostering connections for children and youth. Through career coaching, educational scholarships, mental health services, mentoring, and intentional sibling visits and camp experiences, we have effectively empowered children, equipping them with the necessary tools to thrive.

A critical issue that we encountered this past year was increased mental health issues faced by foster youth. The isolation and uncertainty they face have led to heightened anxiety, depression, and feelings of loneliness. The lack of stability and consistent support systems has further compounded these challenges. Recognizing the urgency of this issue, we expanded to provide youth with mental health services. Licensed therapists who specialize in trauma-informed care were hired to offer individual and group therapy sessions.

However, we acknowledge that there is still much work to be done and will continue to advocate for funding and resources to expand our services, ensuring that every foster youth receives the help they need.

Please champion our efforts to prioritize the mental health and well-being of foster youth. Together, we can make a difference and help them overcome their challenges.

I am grateful for your support and unwavering dedication to our mission of creating a brighter future for foster children.

*Tonya L. Torosian*



PROMISES 2 KIDS

With over 2,000 current and former foster children in San Diego, there exists untapped potential that’s waiting to be discovered and nurtured. These children, having faced adversity and hardship, hold within them the spark of a brighter, more successful future. This is where your support becomes crucial.

Over 90% of foster youth will never graduate from college



Foster children move an average of 7 times before they age out of foster care



35% of children are living apart from one or more siblings



80% of youth experience mental health issues as a result of their abuse; most often depression or PTSD



Youth in foster care are 2.5 times more likely to contemplate suicide and 4 times more likely to attempt suicide

# Guardian Scholars

Naomi (21) and her 3 siblings entered care in 2009. Her mother's mental health struggles meant that she could not care for them, and on top of being physically abusive, her father was involved with drugs and gang violence.

At age 11, Naomi and her siblings entered the A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center. From there, she lived in 5 homes and attended 3 schools.

In 2021, Naomi joined Guardian Scholars and is pursuing a communications degree at Mira Costa College. Her goal is to work with children and become a motivational speaker.

*In her words, "It's always been my siblings and I and no one else, so I've learned to do things by myself. However, through Guardian Scholars, I've found a community of support that can stand with me through growth and new experiences."*

Since joining, Naomi has excelled and overcome difficult circumstances. One of her biggest challenges was opening up to others, but through her mentor, Naomi began to trust that some people really want the best for her. Her mentor has helped with her resume, set and achieve goals, and more. Regular tutoring provided through Promises2Kids keeps her on track academically, therapy keeps her healthy and motivated, and care packages have been a reminder of self-love.

With the support of the community, Naomi continues to grow and chase her dreams.

**GUARDIAN SCHOLARS** supports current and former foster youth with mentoring, case management, and a financial stipend to pursue their educational and career dreams, and advance to complete their vocational training, community college, or university education.

368

former foster youth  
were served through  
Guardian Scholars  
this past year





# Camp Connect

Felix (5), Leo (8), and Isabella (10) entered care in 2022 due to severe abuse and neglect. Like many foster children, they were separated and are currently living apart. Felix and Leo live in one home, with Isabella in another.

They attend monthly events through Camp Connect so they can regularly reconnect, strengthen their relationship, and create new and unforgettable memories.

During an outing to the fair, they rode as many rides as they could, racing arm-in-arm between the rides, excitedly recounting the thrills of each. One of the highlights of their day was watching the mini pig races. They each selected a pig to cheer for and put on pig nose masks, smiling and laughing at how they all matched.

Upon leaving the fair, they took a photo to remember their special day, tightly embraced, and didn't want to say goodbye.

These cherished moments capture why precious opportunities like this are important to separated siblings.

The generosity from the community ensures that Felix, Leo, and Isabella can continue to remain in each other's lives, and support one another no matter what their futures hold.

## CAMP CONNECT

reunites brothers and sisters who are separated in the foster care system through a six-day residential summer camp and 10 additional day events throughout the year.

157

brothers and sisters  
were reunited this  
past year

# Foster Funds

735

children had special requests fulfilled this past year

Yana (15 months old) entered care at birth due to her mother's struggle with drug abuse. She and her 7-year-old sister were separated and live apart in different homes.

Through Something Special, the request for Spanish board books and Spanish speaking and music classes for her was funded.

Yana's extended family on her father's side is Spanish speaking, however due to safety reasons, they are not in contact with her father and have yet to engage with Yana. Yana's foster parent does not share the same cultural background and wants Yana to connect with her culture, keeping the door open for her to communicate with her family in the future should circumstances change.

Yana loves her new books! As they were presented to her, she immediately said "Buh! Buh!" - her pronunciation of "book". During therapy, she happily showed the books to her therapist and while the original plan was to do other exercises, plans changed to meet Yana's excitement and they read her new books together instead.

She enjoyed her new books on a road trip, and her foster siblings who study Spanish in school enjoyed sharing their knowledge with her. One of her favorite things to do is dance to a song about parts of the body.

Fulfilling requests like Yana's have a huge impact on a child's life, reminding them that they are not alone and have a community of support.

## FOSTER FUNDS

Foster children often feel alone and isolated and may go without simple pleasures of childhood such as birthday gifts, a sports uniform, a musical instrument, or extracurricular activities. Promises2Kids has special funds set up to support these needs not met through typical funding.





# A.B. & Jessie Polinsky Children's Center

Celeste (18) entered care last year due to severe abuse and neglect. Due to the threat of danger in her home, she was placed at the A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center (PCC).

Being uprooted from her home, regardless of trauma and danger, was disorienting and distressing for her. She felt depressed, refused to attend school, isolated herself from others, and periodically got into altercations with her peers.

After a short while, Celeste began to come out of her shell. She started attending monthly events hosted by Promises2Kids Youth2Youth peer mentors, where she was introduced to new experiences and learned independent living skills.

Peer mentors are former foster children who have been in care themselves and lend their experience during challenging times. Celeste formed a close bond with one mentor and slowly began to express herself. With a group of peers, she tie-dyed a pillowcase to help her feel more at home, created and shared a vision board to help her focus on future goals, and after her mentor frequently helped her wake up and make the bus for school, she began to do so on her own.

Celeste moved into her own apartment, thanks to the support she received from her mentor with the interview process. She graduated from high school and is looking forward to joining Guardian Scholars while attending community college.

**A.B. & JESSIE POLINSKY CHILDREN'S CENTER (PCC)** is a County operated emergency shelter for children who are removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect. Promises2Kids funds programs, services, and activities for children cared for by the center each year.

766

children were cared for through PCC this past year

32

children (ages 5-17)  
have been positively  
impacted by one-on-one  
mentoring this  
past year

# Mentoring

Dylan (16) entered foster care at age 9 due to severe abuse and neglect. He was separated from his siblings and they have lived apart ever since. Since entering care, Dylan has moved 5 times and currently lives in a group home.

Mentoring through Promises2Kids has played a critical role in his life for 8 years, providing much needed support and guidance. He and his mentor meet 2-3 times each month, doing activities like going to the trampoline park, creating study plans, celebrating holidays, and talking about potential paths he can take after high school.

*"I entered the foster care system at a young age and adapted quickly. I didn't know how to handle my emotions so I lashed out at the people who cared for me. It was hard at times but I had a support team I could rely on. My mentor is the reason I am who I am today and is one of the people who has been on my team the longest. He has taught me many valuable life lessons and we have an even more valuable relationship. We have many good memories together, so much that it is hard to choose a top one. One of my favorite memories is when he took me and his son to Belmont Park and I went around the park going on rides and afterwards we had ice cream and burgers." – Dylan*

## MENTORING

matches children 5 and up who are healing from their past trauma, with mentors who will listen, support, and guide them, as they navigate childhood. Mentors are essential to helping children thrive and achieve their goals, while overcoming challenges caused by past abuse they endured through no fault of their own.



Together  
we can do  
so much.

You can help make a  
difference in the lives  
of over 2,000 current and  
former foster children in  
San Diego:

## DONATE

Through your generosity, you can help a foster child receive the necessary support and services for a brighter future. Your gift of any size will make a difference.

## VOLUNTEER

Become a Mentor or a Camp Connect Counselor and provide the support and guidance to students aspiring to reach their educational and career goals, and reunite siblings living apart in foster care.

## ATTEND

Our fundraiser, the Dream On Concert Gala, is held annually to benefit foster children. Enjoy an exclusive dinner and a private concert featuring a major recording artist.

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Stay up to date and follow us on social media @Promises2Kids.



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