

A Magical Reunion

Camp Connect's annual trip to Disneyland has been a highlight of the year for several years running and this one was no exception! Brothers and sisters living apart in foster care had the opportunity to reunite and spend quality time together at the "Happiest Place on Earth". This trip would be several camper's very first to Disneyland.

Before the long drive up to Anaheim, youth enjoyed breakfast and picked up their goodie bags full of stickers, pins, temporary tattoos, and a notepad to collect autographs from their favorite characters.

With excitement near its peak, they set out into the park. Campers split into smaller groups to explore all the park has to offer, from classics like Thunder Mountain, The Haunted Mansion, to Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge and the new Tiana's Bayou Adventure. Campers made extensive use of the Lightning Lane, which gave them access to shorter wait times for rides all day.



Weston (11) and Myleah (7) entered care in 2022 due to severe abuse and neglect and have been living apart ever since. Thankfully, they've both been constants at Camp Connect where they reunite at monthly events like this one.

Weston loves his little sister and loves taking care of her. Myleah was so excited walking into the park that she couldn't slow down and kept losing the group in the crowd. After asking her

to wait several times, Weston suggested that they hold hands while walking and they both agreed that was a good idea!

Always protective, Weston insisted they keep applying sunscreen while they waited in line for rides, and though Myleah was annoyed, she'd always let her brother help her with the spots she missed on her nose and shoulders.

Throughout the day, he continued to look after her as they explored and experienced all that the park had to offer!

It was a magical day for all 75 Camp Connect youth who attended and judging by the smiles and laughter, it will be a day they remember for a long time. Thanks to supporters like you for making this possible for siblings like Weston and Myleah.



Message From The CEO



As I reflect on April as Child Abuse Prevention Month and May as National Foster Care Month, it's crucial to emphasize the importance of recognizing, reporting, and preventing child abuse. Every child deserves to grow up in

a safe, loving environment, yet for many children this isn't their reality. Foster children are victims, through no fault of their own, and we must do everything we can to prevent further harm. Our responsibility as a community is to protect them and to ensure they have the resources and opportunities to thrive.

Awareness is the first step. By recognizing the signs of abuse and neglect, we can save lives. If you suspect a child is being mistreated, report it by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-344-6000. Your action could be the difference between an innocent child's safety and continued suffering.

But awareness alone isn't enough. We need volunteers and donors who through their time, talent, and treasure, can help provide essential services like therapy, mentoring, and financial support for foster children to heal and have brighter futures. Your contribution makes a difference.

Promises2Kids is committed to understanding and addressing the unique needs of foster children. We also acknowledge the dedication of foster parents, social workers, volunteers, and community members like you who provide love, stability, and support. Our work isn't possible without you.

Together, let's continue being the ones to support and uplift foster children.

Tonya Torosian, MSW, CFRE
Chief Executive Officer, Promises2Kids

Promises2Kids continues to provide comfort and hope to nearly 2,000 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 Kiara!

Growing up in a dysfunctional household, is just as it sounds - dysfunctional. I grew up in a chaotic household where most times I didn't feel safe or secure. I grew up thinking this was a normal family dynamic, until I entered the foster system at the age of 16. My whole world along with my 7 other siblings was turning upside down.

All these emotions such as anxiety, depression, fear, abandonment quickly hit the surface. I learned that I had so much childhood trauma and mental health issues I had to unpack. With lots of therapy and self-healing I've learned that while my past will always be a part of me, it does not have to define my future.

I am currently a part of Promises2Kids Guardian Scholars program. During my time in this program, I have gained a community of former foster youth who all have similar experiences. This community has helped me be more open to sharing my story, and in return I hope it encourages other foster youth to share their own. I've learned the importance of advocating for myself and other youth. Our voices might not have been heard as kids, we can be seen and heard now as young adults.

While I originally went to school for cosmetology and worked at a salon, I realized that I wanted to do something that had a greater impact.

I am currently enrolled at Stanbridge University as a nursing student and at MiraCosta working towards my degree in Psychology. My life journey has not been easy, but it has made me have compassion and empathy for others that I hope to help in the future with my career path.

Galatians 5:22 lists the fruit of the spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. I aspire to break the trauma cycle from my past and radiate these characteristics onto others. - *Kiara*



Building Tomorrow's Advocates Today

A significant portion of advocacy deals with getting out into the community, sharing your experiences in an effective and motivating way. Telling your story is a powerful way to put a face and a life to the statistics and figures. But when it comes to creating positive change within the official systems and programs themselves, an extra degree of insight makes a world of difference.

Advocates for Change gratefully welcomed a panel of speakers with exactly that insight. The panel included expert professionals in advocacy and lobbying: Ken Moore, Senior Director of Government Relations, Intesa Communications Group; Chida Warren-Darby, Director of the Office of Boards and Commission, Mayor Todd Gloria's Office; and Kenia Zamarripa, Vice President of International and Public Affairs, San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The panel was engaging and sympathetic, touching on topics ranging from imposter syndrome to the role of advocacy in government, to their own paths towards advocacy. Through a Q&A with our advocates, the panel touched on important skills like how to capture an official's attention, how to craft an effective elevator pitch, and crucial dos and don'ts throughout a meeting.



Thank you to Ken, Chida, and Kenia for joining us and helping the next generation of advocates take their next steps!

Giving Back To Help Create Special Memories

I've been volunteering with Promises2Kids for more than 4 years. I started volunteering because my own children had grown, and I wanted to help others. I never imagined just how much this experience would bring to my life.

In my first experience at Camp Connect Summer Camp, I went for 24 hours, just to see how I could handle it. I admit it - I was nervous. I wasn't sure I would know what to do, or if I could be patient enough. What I found was a team lead who welcomed me and helped me become a part of our little group. Even though I planned for one day, some of the campers asked me to stay longer and that made my heart swell. From then on, I knew that I wanted more time with these incredible youth.

Volunteering does have its challenges though. Some of our campers have known real trauma and the adults in their lives have not always been dependable. Whenever difficult moments happen, I try to find extreme patience because they deserve it. I also know fellow volunteers and staff are available to assist during these times when we need it. Promises2Kids offers excellent trauma-informed care classes which are required for all first-time volunteers. This class helps give techniques on how to handle different situations. I retake it annually because I learn something new every time.

As volunteers, we get to support the creation of special memories for siblings who live apart. If not for our efforts, siblings may not have a relationship. What Promises2Kids' Camp Connect Summer Camp does is truly beautiful. I am

honored to volunteer alongside such incredible people to support amazing children. - *Ann Marie Council*



Volunteers Needed for Summer Camp (July 31 - August 4)! Help create lifelong memories for foster children separated in care, with traditional outdoor activities like horseback riding, ziplining, and more! If you are interested in volunteering, visit Promises2Kids.org/Volunteer or email Meagan@Promises2Kids.org.

Pinwheels Of Hope

Our third annual Pinwheels 4 Prevention campaign, honoring Child Abuse Prevention Month, culminated in the planting of over 400 pinwheels to create a pinwheel garden on the lawn of the San Diego County Administration Center followed by a press conference to help raise awareness and critical funds.

Speakers shared the importance of the cause and what we, as a community, can do to eradicate child abuse. We thank everyone involved this year - those who purchased pinwheels, volunteers who helped plant the pinwheel garden, the County of San Diego for partnering in our efforts, and our Prevention Partners:

Andrew and Kristen Ruiz, Barona Band of Mission Indians, Bonnie Chen, Coronado Woman's Club, Ed and Namita Woolery, Fakouri Electrical Engineering, Inc., Gensler, Kelly Lemker, Kairos Church, Molly's Angels Foundation, Thor Eakes, and the Quigley and Hewitt Families.



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The Impact Of Mentoring

Promises2Kids' Mentoring Program provides 200 current and former foster children with stable, supportive, and understanding mentors to help them feel connected, affirmed, and cared for. In the past year alone, this vibrant and resilient community has provided over 1,000 hours of community, guidance, and more, to San Diego's foster youth.



Eden (15) entered care at 12 due to severe neglect. The resulting trauma and upheaval during such a critical age has been a significant challenge for her success and well-being. New schools, new caregivers, and a lack of consistent support left her feeling isolated and untrusting.

She was paired with her mentor, Autumn, through Promises2Kids last year. They've grown close through regular meetups, checking in, and occasional venting. For Autumn, it's about being available to Eden, seeing her and hearing her as a person, that has made the difference.

"I feel honored and rewarded that Eden has grown so open and authentically herself with me in such a short time. She's been through so much, and all that I stress is that a lot of it is not her fault – that she is valuable and has a lot to give." – Mentor Autumn

In the past year, Eden is doing her best to settle and feel comfortable with herself. She's making friends at regular Promises2Kids mentoring events, looking forward to earning her learner's permit, and finding her first job. For Autumn, she knows that things will continue to get better together.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor, email Matthew@Promises2Kids.org.

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Advocacy In The Nation's Capital

Guardian Scholars, Andres and Marquita, both members of our Advocates for Change group, flew to the nation's capital for The San Diego Chamber of Commerce 2025 Mission to Washington, D.C. delegation trip.

Andres and Marquita volunteered for the chance to advocate on issues facing the foster youth community including housing instability, mental health, childcare and parenting support.

They were joined by Promises2Kids CEO Tonya Torosian, Chief Programs Officer Valerie Centeno, and Director of Programs Rashida Elimu, as they met with many elected officials including United States Representatives Sara Jacobs and Scott Peters, San Diego City Council President Joe LaCava and Councilmembers Stephen Witburn and Marni von Wilpert, and Senator Adam Schiff.

It is always inspiring to work alongside these Guardian Scholars who seized this opportunity to share their personal stories and voice the concerns and adversity facing many of San Diego's foster current and former foster children.

Thank you to the official airline partner of Promises2Kids, Southwest Airlines, for making this trip possible!



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