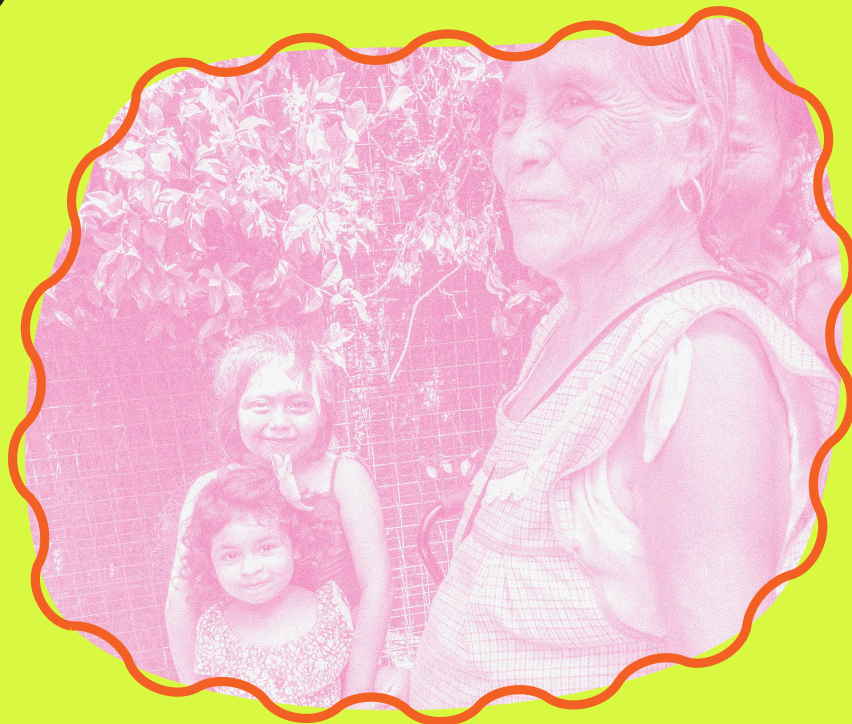


[illegible]

a place called home

Table of Contents



◇	CEO MESSAGE/////3
◇	OUR YEAR IN REVIEW/////4
◇	THE POWER OF ONE/////6
◇	LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!/////8
◇	FULL STEAM AHEAD/////9
◇	BLOWING THE WHISTLE: YOUTH REFEREES/////10
◇	VENTURE AND EXPLORE/////12
◇	SCHOLARLY PURSUITS////14
◇	CAREER DEFINING MOMENTS/////16
◇	BUILDING INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY/////17
◇	THE HEARTBEAT OF APCH/////18
◇	WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK////19
◇	A STILL LIFE OF APCH/////20
◇	APCH LEADERSHIP/////22
◇	WAYS TO GIVE/////23



CEO MESSAGE

"Our youth members are not just participants in our programs, they are leaders, innovators, and changemakers."

Dear Friends,

I am thrilled to share A Place Called Home's 2024 Newsletter with you. In these pages, you will discover beautiful stories highlighting the voices of our members, staff, and partners. As you read, I hope you will see just how much of an impact your support is making for the youth and families we serve.

APCH's mission to inspire, encourage, and support youth in South Central has always been rooted in listening, learning, and evolving. I'm excited to share how we are deepening our commitment to these values, ensuring that our young people are at the heart of everything we do. Our guiding theme this year is "bloom where you are planted," a powerful reminder that we are all capable of growing and thriving wherever life takes us, regardless of what circumstances surround us. At APCH, which has served South Central Los Angeles for more than 30 years, it inspires us to celebrate everything we've accomplished over the last three decades, while preparing for an exciting future.

Our youth members are not just participants in our programs, they are leaders, innovators, and changemakers. Over the past year, we have actively engaged them in conversations about their hopes, challenges, and aspirations, and have heard directly from them about what matters most. Their feedback has been invaluable, guiding us as we refine our programs to better meet their needs.

We understand that today's youth face unique pressures and challenges, and it is our responsibility to equip them with the tools and support they need to thrive. We are excited to launch our Youth Leadership Council, incorporating our members' voices into our strategic planning to help us create a more responsive, dynamic organization that is better prepared to help them navigate their journeys. We are also getting creative about making more space for exploration during our after school hours, so that kids have the chance to try new activities and approach learning in different ways, while honing the skills that will serve them throughout their lives.

This work is not possible without your support. Your generosity and dedication empower us to innovate and adapt, ensuring that APCH remains a place where every young person can find belonging, discover their potential, and build a bright future. Whether you've contributed your time, talent, or treasure, please know that you are making a profound difference in the lives of so many.

Thank you for being a part of our journey. I am excited for what lies ahead and I know that with your continued support, we will continue to achieve great things!

With gratitude,
Norayma Cabot

The Current Landscape

1. 86% of APCH members are living at or below the federal poverty line, and all qualify as low-income.
2. The community APCH serves has a poverty rate more than double that of the average for LA County as a whole.
3. 95% of the children in APCH's community qualify for free or reduced lunch, compared to 69% for the county as a whole.
4. According to a study by USC Dornsife, over 1 million residents across the county are food insecure. South Los Angeles, for example, has one of the highest rates of food insecurity, where 1 in 4 people don't know if they will have a next meal. (2023)
5. In the community APCH serves, 54.6% of adults over the age of 25 do not have a high school diploma, and only 7.3% of adults age 25 and older have attained a bachelor's degree or higher.

Here's What We're Doing About It

1. We've provided 80,000+ hours of programming and support including classes and field trips, workshops, professional readiness and more!
2. We've served 15,000+ meals to our members.
3. We're currently supporting 86 students in college through the APCH Shaheen Scholarship program.
4. We've provided 3,000+ hours of mental health counseling support.
5. We've distributed 9,500+ bags of groceries through our weekly Family Resource Depot.
6. We've provided nearly \$50,000 in direct assistance to our families most in need.



SURVEY SAYS

In order to continue actively engaging the young people we serve in our decision making, we surveyed our members to find out more about their experiences at APCH. Here are a few key highlights:

82% of APCH members would recommend our programs to one of their peers, indicating high levels of engagement and satisfaction.

Why it matters: The quality of afterschool programs is closely linked to the expertise and professionalism of staff. Programs that employ expert instructors (e.g., professional musicians, coaches) are better equipped to provide high-quality, engaging interests and lead to better outcomes (Vandell & Lao, 2016).

83% of APCH teens are planning to go to college

Why it matters: Afterschool programs that focus on college readiness, particularly for underrepresented groups, have been shown to improve non-cognitive skills like academic mindsets, motivation, and behaviors that are crucial for college success. These programs serve as hubs for promoting college access by providing targeted support beyond what is available during the regular school day (Tichavakunda, 2019).

98% of APCH teens feel motivated to make a difference in their community

Why it matters: Teens motivated to engage in community-focused activities experience improvements in empathy, leadership, academic outcomes, and personal growth, which contribute to their overall positive development. (Gomez & Ang, 2007; Loh et al., 2016; Morrissey & Werner-Wilson, 2005; Schusler et al., 2009).



The Power

Jose's Story



"It was along the lines of, 'Don't give up, prove it to yourself.' Make sure you get this degree and advance in life and give back to everybody that's helped you out."



er of One

By: Mira Zimet



he generosity of David and Linda Shaheen made a huge impact on the life of Jose Rivas.

Each year, the couple welcomes a new cohort of young people as part of A Place Called Home's (APCH) Shaheen Scholarship program. To date, they've helped pave the way for more than 400 APCH first-

generation students to attend the college or university of their choice. One remarkable recipient, Rivas, not only completed his four-year degree at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo in civil engineering, but is also intent on repaying this generosity.

"Somebody who's never met me is willing to help, and they're genuine about it," Rivas shares. "That had a big effect and was a wakeup call for me to start thinking, 'Okay, I can give money too.'" Today, Rivas continues to increase his monthly contributions and is now part of APCH's Social Change Club. "I want to be able to give back with even more than what they helped me with," he adds.

Growing up in nearby Compton, Rivas started at APCH in 10th grade when a friend from King Drew Magnet High School introduced him to the organization. Along with a group of peers, he would travel by bus or metro a few times a week to get involved in activities and volunteer. He joined the music group, played basketball, and tutored in math. By 11th grade, Rivas discovered the Higher Education program and dove right in.

"I didn't really have a set mentality for college," Rivas said. "Part of me was thinking that I could join the Air Force and not worry about student loans." At the time, his father also encouraged him to get a job, concerned about his son accumulating debt. But once Rivas learned about the financial aid available, along with the possibility of the Shaheen Scholarship, he decided to pursue college. He knew that "messing up and not completing his degree," was not an option.

College opened his eyes up to more than just academics. By attending school with young people from various backgrounds and social economic groups, Rivas not only

met his future wife, but gained a new perspective on the world.

"My mentality in high school was if you see somebody in an Escalade or a Mercedes driving around town, it's like, 'Oh yeah, they're probably dealing dope,'" he recalls. "But now I realized that they probably had a lawyer or a doctor in the family." This new lens hit home again when his now-wife suggested a trip to Zion National Park. "I'm like, it's just dirt. I don't get it," he laughs. But upon visiting, he saw its beauty and how "different" other parts of the country could be. It was a revelation that opened his eyes beyond the city where he was raised. "I realized I could actually save money and buy a trip here." Later, he and his wife ventured to Iceland to see the Northern Lights, a vacation he never imagined himself taking.

Now with a successful career at a wastewater treatment plant in Northern California, Rivas reflects often on the young person he was at APCH. Recently, he came across a letter he wrote to his "future self" during the summer program for the Shaheen Scholarship.

"It was along the lines of, 'Don't give up, prove it to yourself,'" he said. "Make sure you get this degree and advance in life and give back to everybody that's helped you out." The impact of philanthropy was not lost on him. Even then, Rivas realized he was looking for ways to give back as he set his sights on the future.

Lights, Camera, Action!

Each summer, members of the Digital Media Program at A Place Called Home (APCH) can be found huddled around a table brainstorming ideas for a short film. With the luxury of time, they work together over the 6-week, "Be Kind Rewind" session to write, stage, produce, direct and edit an original movie.

Last year, one of the films, a two-minute short, "No More," about a young girl who launches a crowd-funding campaign to help her mother pay medical bills, was showcased in the Youth Diversity Film Festival. Jahcobie Cosom, the Digital Media Program Coordinator, submitted the film to the festival and their movie was one of 26 films to be screened at the Regal LA Live last March in downtown Los Angeles. "It was a really great experience for the members to be able to not only see their work but see their work on the big screen in contrast to other youth work," he said. "Nine members were able to go to the festival, participate in a question-and-answer session and meet new people."

Members are also given the opportunity to screen their films each year at the Moondance Film Festival held in the Fall and hosted by APCH. Emily H., a member in 8th grade, has been part of the program for the past two years. "Ever since I was little, I really wanted to learn more behind the scenes stuff," Emily shared. "And when I first saw the Digital Media Program, I thought it was a great opportunity." Not only did Emily have the opportunity to act, but she also participated in writing some of the scripts and helped stage the shots. This year they will be screening "Money Up," a film she worked on. "It's hard to put yourself out there, especially showing a film to a lot of people at the Festival, but I've learned how to be more

confident in myself and I've had a lot of fun."

The film program continues throughout the year, but experts in the Digital Media Program also teach members animation, graphic design and photography skills. "It's imperative that students have the understanding of digital tools to not only creatively express themselves, but to keep up," Cosom said. "It gives them access to tools that help them become 21st century citizens."

Animation students learn stop motion, clay motion and 3D animation on iPads. Those interested in graphic design, learn the fundamentals of design.

Members have worked on projects ranging from a five-layer dragon to the design of an album cover. Photography students are taught how to manually operate Sony mirrorless cameras, along with composition skills.

For the second year in a row, the photography students were tasked in the Spring with taking photos of the young APCH dancers. The images were used in marketing materials and shown at the end of year "Haus of Arts" festival.

For those who aren't sure where they want to jump in, there is an option to participate in the Digital Media Exploration course, where they can build fundamental skills designed to move into the more creative classes.

As to the importance of storytelling through these mediums, Cosom shared that,

"There needs to be more stories from the point of view of South Central, from the point of view of the young people that sit in our classrooms," he said. "I tell the members all the time that the cameras are like their eyes looking at the world and only they can decide how they want to reveal what world they are living in." - M.Z.



"There needs to be more stories from the point of view of South Central, from the point of view of the young people that sit in our classrooms."

Full STEAM Ahead

Manuel Galindo took the “Fun Friday” experiment extravaganza at A Place Called Home (APCH) to the next level. Starting as the Math and Science Coordinator earlier this year, Galindo’s first activity with his third-through-fifth grade group, called the “littles” and his sixth-through-eighth grade group, called the “middles” was a paper tower challenge. He grouped the members in fours, handed out paper, showed them some video examples, and watched their creations come to life.

“The only thing that changed was the language that I used and how I approached the lesson,” he said. “I wanted to make the lesson accessible to all.”

In the beginning, Galindo said, the towers kept falling over. “But the great part was when they started bouncing ideas off of each other and realized if they built them stronger from the bottom, they would go up higher,” he said. “They would steal ideas from one group, like ‘Oh, wait, that idea is working better. Let’s do it like that.’ They were observing. And I was like, okay, this is good.”

With a bachelor’s degree in urban learning from California State University, Los Angeles and a background in math and science, along with a passion for architecture and engineering, Galindo continued to gear all his lessons toward STEAM activities. “STEAM meaning, science, technology, engineering, art and math,” he said. “Not all our members love math and science, and exposing them at an early age in this way is amazing. They learn how to question, how to be engaged and it might help them decide on science as something they want to study in the future.”

During the week, Galindo tutors both groups in math and science, but it’s these Friday activities that get the students excited.

Another recent project that resonated with the members was the Boat Challenge. After some instruction, the little’s were given clay, the middle’s foil. They were all tasked with making a boat and then seeing how many pennies they could place inside it before it sank.

“One girl, she had this really nice boat, and she had—like I suggested—measured it and got all the angles right,” he said. “And her boat was the one that started holding the most pennies. The mostly female-filled class all saw her working with the ruler and measurements and when their boats sank, or didn’t hold any pennies, they started trying to do it her way.” Galindo went on to add, “Especially since there’s a lack of females in the sciences, it’s amazing that we are getting more girls involved in this class.”

As the semester continued, Galindo continued to teach the concepts through fun activities. Members worked on balloon cars and catapults, as he hopes to move toward more robotic-themed activities. “I’m scaffolding my way up,” he said. “I’m having them create simple machines and understand why certain things work the way they do.”

He then shared the story of a young girl who starts middle school this Fall. “She told me that she wants to study science in college and is going to continue taking my class whenever she can,” he said. “I was like, perfect, thank you. That’s awesome.” - M.Z.

“They learn how to question, how to be engaged and it might help them decide on science as something they want to study in the future.”



It was an official game. The middle-school aged players on the court were frustrated. Tensions were rising, and a few of the young girls got into an argument. Dressed in her black and white striped shirt with a whistle around her neck, 16-year-old referee Tiana D. paced back and forth across the sidelines of the basketball court. She knew she had to do something. She was ready for this. Blowing her whistle, she started to speak.

"At first they were kind of brushing me off," Tiana said, "but the more I showed them I was in control and pushed them about having good sportsmanship, that's what turned it around and really helped."

Tiana is one of a handful of high school students who were recruited by the South Central Sports League at A Place Called Home (APCH) to learn how to referee. The new program, which began in January with

soccer, expanded this past Spring with basketball and is gearing up to bring in a new cohort for volleyball this Fall. The junior referees are teamed with independent contractors who are hired by APCH to serve as adult ref's who work side-by-side with these young members.

"I used to play basketball when I was younger," Tiana said. "I played for about five years, and I was really passionate about it, but I hurt my ankle. By refereeing, I'm still inside the game, controlling the game. It was a great opportunity for me to get back into basketball without playing physically."

The idea for training APCH members to be referees came about when Desiree Torres, Athletics Program Manager, realized there was a way to provide job opportunities for high school students who were interested in sports. "There is a big need for referees on this level, so why aren't we training our kids to do this?" said Torres. "And it worked."

The referees go through an extensive training program. They manage the entire season and are responsible for

Blowing the

submitting game reports. They meet weekly with Eder Lujan, the South Central Sports League Manager, and Torres to ensure they have the support they need.

For Lujan, the big win was that the referees took away a sense of community. "They were able to learn how proper interactions should be handled and how to problem solve without the need for conflict," he said. "They learned how to mentor and how to work as a team."

Torres added that another primary goal of the new program was to instill confidence. "You are in charge of the game," she told the referees. "It's your call. You own it. The minute that you put on your referee jersey, it's almost like a superpower."

Tiana agreed that refereeing helped her with her confidence and gave her the ability to speak out and use her voice. Along with the confidence, she learned more about herself by mentoring the younger kids. "That was my favorite part of the actual job," she said. "Learning how to help them develop their skills in basketball and teaching them about something that I love was very moving to me. I was like, 'Wow, this is like, this is great, you know?'"

Next, Torres and Lujan hope to start on a coach's pipeline. "We saw a big gap in coaches for the South Central Sports League," Torres said. "And we're seeing the need to provide that opportunity for our teens, as well." - M.Z.

Youth Referees

It's your call.
You own
it.



The
you



minute that
put on your

referee jersey,



it's almost



like a



superpower.

Venture And Explore

At A Place Called Home, summer is a time for exploration, adventure, and most importantly, FUN! Here are a few of the exciting places across Los Angeles that our members visited this summer.

- 01 *Exploring sea life at the Aquarium of the Pacific*
- 02 *APCH athletes practice on the LA Galaxy training field*
- 03 *APCH dinosaurs (a.k.a. staff members) compete in a relay race at our all-agency park day*
- 04 *Experiencing the magic of the Harry Potter sorting hat on the Warner Bros. Studio tour*
- 05 *Fun in the sun (and sand!) at APCH's beach day*
- 06 *The infamous APCH watermelon eating contest*
- 07 *APCH teens strike a pose during their UCLA tour*
- 08 *Looking through a deep sea portal at the California Science Center*



05

02



04



07



03



01



08



06

Scholarly Pursuits

As Angel Perez prepares to enter the PhD program at UCLA this Fall, he attributes his academic trajectory to both his parents urging him to get an education and the staff and mentors from A Place Called Home (APCH) who guided him on this path.

Growing up in South Los Angeles, Perez' parents passed by APCH daily and signed their son up when he was in fifth grade. Perez said he wasn't "a great student at the time," but was able to take advantage of the educational support and the homework groups. He excelled in math, but at APCH he was able to discover a passion for the arts, engaging in the theater, music, and digital media programs. "As a student, I've always been a logical person," he said. "I never really got the chance to embrace my creative side. So, I really enjoyed doing that. I was able to make friends, laugh and have fun. It drew me out so much."

Perez left APCH for a few years but returned before his senior year, focused on college. "I just knew that I needed to go to college," he said, "Mostly because my parents kept talking about it," he added, laughing. The initial motivation to make his parents "happy," switched in high school when he realized his pursuit of secondary education was for himself. But he still needed support and the Higher Education program at APCH fit his needs perfectly.

As soon as members enter high school, they are encouraged to join the Higher Education program at APCH. "Since a lot of them are usually the first in their family to go to college, we want to make sure that they are as ready as they possibly can be," said Jennifer Martinez, the Senior Manager of Higher Education. "We have college readiness classes, seminars for seniors to help them with college applications, financial aid, scholarship application assistance."

Another perk is that each spring, a group of students are given the opportunity to visit a handful of colleges in Northern California. "This is an opportunity for them to expand their horizons and think about campuses they might have not even really known of," she said.

But the biggest component of the Higher Education program is the Shaheen Scholarship. The financial gap college scholarship is open to APCH members for up to six years and up to \$15,000 per year. While the monetary investment in the youth is critical, it is the additional one-on-one support that continues throughout their

college education that is pivotal to their success. Assistant managers keep track of all scholarship recipients, checking in with them at least twice a semester or quarter, making sure they are on the path to graduation. This past year the teams moved from Zoom visits to in-person with the hope to expand that feature in the future.

For Perez, the entire experience with APCH was a success. He attended Cal State Dominguez Hills as a math education major. During his second year, a professor introduced him to math research, which led to working on a research project with her and later, in the summer of 2023, attending a summer long research program at UC Irvine. There he made the decision to continue his academic journey and applied and was accepted into the PhD program at UCLA in biostatistics. As far as the Shaheen Scholarship, Perez was incredibly grateful for the gift. "It was stress-relieving to know that I had that extra support," he said. It also helped him gain some independence when he moved into a dorm his junior year to get the experience of living on his own.

What stayed with Perez from his time at APCH was the mentoring. "I definitely connected with so many different people there and they really all helped me learn how to be a student, how to be a person and taught me the life lessons that I was able to take with me."

For Martinez, who worked with Perez as assistant manager when he was already in college, she wants people to know how much the staff really cares for their members. "We see them as humans and when we say we want the best for you, they know we mean it. And I feel like that just shows the magic of this place," Martinez said. - M.Z.

We see them as humans and when we say we want the best for you, they know we mean it. And I feel like that just shows the magic of this place."

In 2023, Angel attended the Annual APCH Shaheen Scholarship Luncheon as a member of that year's current scholars cohort.



Earlier this year, Angel returned, now a college graduate, to share his wisdom with incoming scholars at the 2024 Luncheon.

*we say we
just shows the
place."
of this
want the best for you, they
know we mean*

"My experience with this program showed me that I do want to open my own clinic for children. I want to make sure that the people in my community are taken care of."



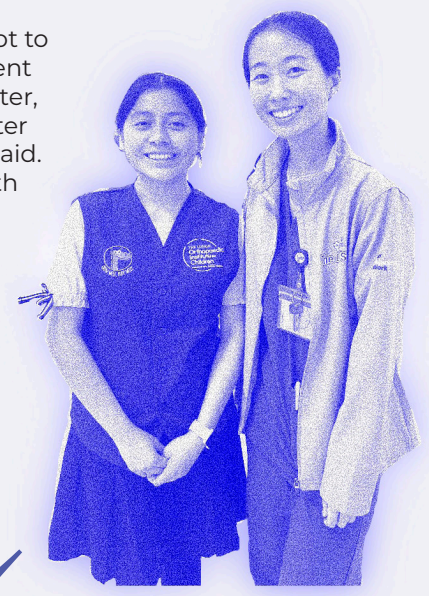
By: Maggie Stillman

Career

From a young age, APCH member Jenny G. knew she wanted to pursue a career in the medical field. The oldest of four, she often finds herself taking care of her siblings

and other family members – a role which she feels has well prepared her for the field. It's no surprise, then, that Jenny was overjoyed to land a summer internship with The Lusk Orthopaedic Institute for Children through the PREP (Professional Readiness and Employment Pathways) program at A Place Called Home (APCH).

"Everything was super fun! I got to work with the doctors in different departments – in the rehab center, the fracture center, and the center for sports medicine, too," Jenny said. "I had the opportunity to work with actual patients, and I even got to experience having a cast on. I feel like it would get itchy to have it on for a long time, but it was cool!"



Defining

APCH's PREP Program provides a range of opportunities for the organization's youth members, like Jenny, as well as young people from the surrounding South Central community. PREP currently hosts internship positions each semester – spring, summer, and fall – including opportunities to work with other departments at APCH, and outside partners like DBS Bank, as well as Lusk OIC. In addition, they provide other job readiness services including resume building, mock interviews, and application assistance.

It's important to note that all PREP internship opportunities are paid. "That's a non-negotiable for us," said Katherine Monterroso, Senior Manager of PREP. "We want to make sure our interns are getting paid for their work, and that we're helping to bridge that equity gap we see across incomes in our community. Our goal is to not only meet the minimum wage, but to exceed it."

Moments

PREP has been growing, and this year, was fortunate to receive support from dedicated APCH board member Susan Wolf and her husband Marcus Ryle, who deepened their already firm commitment to the organization by stepping in as sponsors of the high school internship program.

"We were so excited to be able to support PREP at APCH because we believe that providing hands-on work experience promotes collaboration, accountability, problem solving skills, and most importantly, self worth and confidence," Wolf shared. "It has been a joy to meet the interns and hear how their experience with the program has been such a positive one!"

As is true with all the programming that APCH offers, the organization's mission comes to life through PREP – empowering and inspiring young people to be bold, explore their interests, and pursue their dreams. "The goal of the program is for our members to feel like they have the experience, the knowledge, and the tools to succeed on their own in a professional setting," Monterroso said. "For them to be able to say to themselves 'Hey, I got this', and really affirm for them 'You are capable and you belong here.'"

Ultimately, internships like these can be career defining moments for a young person like Jenny. "The stories I've heard from my family in Guatemala about unfair healthcare treatment, or no healthcare at all, make me want to step up," she shared. "My experience with this program showed me that I do want to open my own clinic for children. I want to make sure that the people in my community are taken care of."

Jenny's test cast!



Building Intentional Community

Gabe T., a senior in high school, sets his backpack down and takes a seat in a small circle of chairs, joining his peers for their daily check in. This is how each session begins in Journey, A Place Called Home (APCH)'s peer mentoring group for high school-aged male identifying members.

During check-in, each member takes a turn sharing how they're feeling and any thoughts that are top of mind. "When we've finished checking in, that's when our instructor gives us a discussion topic for the day," Gabe said. "Everyday we have a new topic, from resolving conflicts with family members or friends to learning to express our emotions in healthy ways. For many of us, we don't get the opportunity to have these conversations anywhere else, so Journey gives us a place to do so."

It sometimes takes some time for members to warm up and feel comfortable sharing. "The quietest kid at the beginning of the year can become the one talking the most by the end," Gabe reflected. It's really amazing to see how everyone grows."

"The purpose of these groups is to give our members a space to build community with each other," said Alexia Pino, Mentoring Program Coordinator. "There are a lot of

Members in all of the peer mentoring groups work on volunteer projects together, participate in workshops with guest speakers, and team up to create culminating projects about what they've learned during the semester. Members get creative and present raps, poems, art pieces, and songs as their final projects.

"My favorite part of facilitating peer mentoring groups is seeing the relationships that our young people build with each other," said Victoria Edwards, Mentoring Program Assistant. "Not only are they connecting during program time, but they're staying in touch outside of APCH which is really exciting to see."

At its core the Mentoring program at APCH creates spaces where young people can feel safe to open up, to speak honestly, and to get support from others through their challenges and their successes.

"One time we had a conversation about what we wanted to do in life, and that was really meaningful for me," Gabe reflected. "Honestly, I feel like a lot of us kids in South

"These groups are a way that we can intentionally bring them together and let them know you're not alone, there are others who know exactly how you're feeling."



changes happening for our young people throughout middle and high school, and that can be isolating. These groups are a way that we can intentionally bring them together and let them know you're not alone, there are others who know exactly how you're feeling."

Journey is one of four groups that make up APCH's Mentoring program. There are three other programs, Jr. Journey, G.E.M. (Girls Empowering Many) and GirlPower that are geared toward middle school-aged male identifying members, middle school-aged female identifying members and high school-aged female identifying members, respectively.

Central don't really put stock in their future, but it was cool to learn about what everyone wants to do, and that some of us want to do the same things. It was a really emotional conversation for everyone."

"We're here because of them," Pino said. "Building those relationships and helping guide and shape our members, and most importantly, letting them know we're here for them. That's the ultimate goal." - M.S.

The Heartbeat of APCH

Counseling

Jose Soria, a Senior Case Manager, sets up one of the scenarios the Counseling Department at A Place Called Home (APCH) might encounter.

A young member is in the bathroom, crying. It could be that he or she is having a bad day, or maybe there are problems at home. Soria shares APCH's first step, "Let's find out what's going on and assess to see how we can be of service." In this particular case, the refrigerator was broken, dad's work hours were cut back and the family of five were surviving paycheck to paycheck. Soria contacts the family, explains what happened that day and simply asks, "How can we help?" Thanks to partnerships like The Change Reaction Angel Fund, they can often solve the problem by completing an application and advocating for the family. In most cases the foundation will replace the appliance in question to ensure the family becomes whole again. Soria also signs them up for the APCH Family Resource Depot, which provides weekly fresh produce and food gift cards to tide them over.

That's just one example of how the Counseling department case management wraps itself around our families, and is often referred to as, "the heartbeat of APCH," shares Soria.

Counseling has been part of APCH almost since its inception. "As early as the first or second year our founder realized the organization needed a counseling team," Soria said. Not only are there a lot of problems in the community, but there are also issues in the household that often need to be addressed

One area the department deals with is the taboo around mental health services. "A lot of families, when we call them to refer their children to counseling, they automatically say, 'No, my kid's not crazy,'" Soria said. He then explains to them how they go about helping, with the caveat that the parent's have the final decision. Soria adds that many times parents think it over for a few days and then agree.

"Our parents trust our counseling department and are oftentimes open to their kids getting counseling here in a way that they wouldn't be otherwise," said Aeva Murtaugh, a clinical therapist at APCH.

In addition to one-on-one counseling, the Counseling department addresses mental health and wellness in a variety of other ways. Each morning during the summer, the counseling staff, including Murtaugh, take turns facilitating breathing and mindfulness activities for the entire APCH community. "We go out to the field, sometimes up to 250 kids sitting in a circle, and we teach them

how to use their senses to calm themselves and be more grounded in the world," she said.

APCH also offers a few classes that are geared more specifically to wellness, including "Rest and Relationships" that was designed for middle school-aged students. "We teach them how to have a healthy relationship with themselves, with their peers, and others," Murtaugh said. "Critical thinking about relationships, learning about values and self-compassion." She added a "Bread Making Therapy" course this Fall where members will have the opportunity to work with their hands and create something they can then eat in a therapeutic setting.

The Counseling department also runs a "Family Life Education" parenting class each Wednesday and conducts one-on-one check-ins with the members throughout the year. They also recently created a Zen room with rocking and bean bag chairs that members can use throughout the day if they need a space for quiet and reflection.

"I'm a product of this community," Soria said. "I'm a farmer and my purpose is to ensure that whatever I plant today becomes fruitful for our members in the long run. I would like these families to become self-sustaining, resourceful, resilient, and successful — whatever that success means to them— I'm here to support them." - M.Z.



We've Got Your Back

It was the last day of the summer semester. The culminating celebration was coming to an end, but there was one last surprise awaiting APCH's youth members. Volunteers from Signature Estate & Investment Advisors (SEIA) standing in front of the welcome center ready to hand out brand new backpacks filled with school supplies upon the members' dismissal.

SEIA has been a champion of A Place Called Home (APCH) for more than a decade, providing volunteer support for projects like the Family Resource Depot, a weekly food distribution for APCH families, and sponsoring events, specifically the annual Back to School supply distribution.

"We really wanted to focus on key events throughout the year that were aligned with the values of SEIA and our employees," said Hayley Wood Bates, Financial Advisor with SEIA. Wood Bates, who has been involved with APCH for nearly a decade as a volunteer and former Leadership Council member, added that was why the Back to School event resonated with their company. She credits the evolution of her personal and professional engagement to the long-standing relationships she's built with leaders at the organization.

For SEIA and its employees, supporting APCH and other nonprofits in Los Angeles isn't just a "one-time thing", it's a culture. Each SEIA office branch has "adopted" a nonprofit organization, providing crucial



resources including financial and volunteer support. To ensure that employees have the opportunity to volunteer, the company provides paid time off. "Our company is really intentional about it," Wood Bates said. "We want employees to feel empowered to give their most precious resource – time – to an organization like A Place Called Home."

"But those moments of being in service are a chance to let people know 'we care about you' and we are invested in your wellbeing and success."

"It's all part of our overarching goal – to provide consistent support to nonprofits like APCH need," she added. "We at SEIA can provide steady funding in a way that individuals perhaps can't. Ultimately, we're showing and saying you can count on us – we've got your back."



SEIA's steadfast support has been instrumental in the success of APCH's annual Back to School event, helping to alleviate the financial burden on families and outfit thousands of students with brand new backpacks and school supplies each year.

This support from SEIA isn't just impacting APCH in a big way, it's impacting SEIA employees, too. "Our company is rapidly growing, so we don't necessarily see one another during our regular workdays, and coming to APCH and handing out backpacks, that's an opportunity for all of us to be together for a common purpose," Wood Bates said. "And to have fun, that's a really important part!"

"For me, and, I think, for SEIA as a whole, the most meaningful part is that human connection with our community members," Wood Bates reflects. "Our paths may not cross at another point in our day-to-day lives," says Wood Bates, "but those moments of being in service are a chance to let people know 'we care about you, and we are invested in your wellbeing and success.'" - M.S.

If you're interested in getting your company involved with A Place Called Home, we'd love to have you! Please contact gilbert@apch.org to learn more.



05



03

02



04



07



01



08



A Still Life of APERH

At A Place Called Home, we believe that The Arts have a profound impact on a young person's development. We provide a range of artistic programming through which our members can express themselves, including dance, digital media, music, and visual arts.

The artwork featured in this spread was created by members of our Visual Arts program. The pieces reflect a variety of their projects inspired by Japanese Notan, Mark Rothko, mosaics, and emotions.

- 01 Emma L., Middle School
- 02 Jorge C., Middle School
- 03 Kaiser M., Elementary School
- 04 Zoe F., Elementary School
- 05 Middle School Member
- 06 Sofia A., Elementary School
- 07 Valerie S., Middle School
- 08 Amy R., Middle School

06

APCH Leadership



Board of Directors

Gareth Schweitzer
Board Chair

Barbara Glazer
Vice Chair

Susan Napier
Vice Chair

Hamed Tavajohi
Treasurer

Maryellen Zarakas
Secretary

Dawn Campbell
Sister Patricia Connor, RSHM
Michael Converse
Kathryn Frazier
Sharon Hauptman
Bob Israel
Jacqueline Jimenez
Tom McCabe
Edgar Morales, Alumnus
Adam Rosenblatt
Howard Sherwood
Stephanie Sherwood
Ethan Smith, Alumnus
Vera Stewart
Marshall Wax
Susan Wolf

Leadership Council

Adam Rosenblatt
Chair

Abril Calderon
Derrick Haynes
Emily Hopton
Holly May
Josh Russak
Hayley Wood
Lilly Yeatman

We ❤️ Our Donors!

Our work is not possible without you! View our full donor list at apch.org/donors or scan below to donate!



Interested
in joining
The Leadership
Council?

Visit apch.org/LC
to learn more.

Ways To Give



Donate

Make a One-Time Gift

Your support drives our mission forward! Visit apch.org/donate to make a gift.

Join the Social Change Club

With a monthly gift, you'll have access to exclusive benefits and will help provide consistent support for APCH's mission! Learn more at apch.org/scc.

Leave a Legacy

A Place Called Home is deeply grateful for those who have included us in their estate plans. Contact KAlheim@apch.org to discuss options for your philanthropic legacy.



Volunteer

One Time Opportunities

Join us as an individual volunteer, or gather your friends, family, or coworkers to provide essential support for APCH! Contact volunteer@apch.org for more information.

Recurring Commitments

Forge impactful, long-term connections with us as you support an APCH program or department on an ongoing basis. Contact volunteer@apch.org for more information.



Visit apch.org/getinvolved to get started



Donate here! 



At A Place Called Home, we envision a world where your zip code does not determine your future, where all children have the opportunity to find happiness and success in life. Our mission is to inspire, encourage, and support the young people in South Los Angeles to achieve social, emotional, and economic success.

