



**THE POWER
OF TWO**
ISSUE 35
SUMMER 2018

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Summers are always busy at Families Forward Learning Center, and this one is no different! The sunny and warm Pasadena days are filled with outdoor play, trips to the park, and special celebrations. We recently recognized the achievements of our 32 Pre-K students and their families at the *Bridge to Success* Ceremony, which marks their transition to Kindergarten. The occasion is bittersweet, because while we are always sad to say goodbye to our graduating students, we are so proud of our families and have confidence that they will enter elementary school prepared and excited to learn.

On June 20th we held our annual event for *Guardians* and friends of Families Forward in appreciation of their steadfast support. More than 60 attendees including *Guardians*, volunteers, and community partners gathered in the scenic gardens of the historic Laurabelle Robinson House to enjoy hors d'oeuvres from El Portal and listen to a reading by award-winning author Robin Benway. The evening was made possible thanks to the generous hospitality of homeowners Phaedra and Mark Ledbetter.

While we look forward to summertime traditions such as the annual beach field trip, new programs are making a splash, too! Soon we will launch a new two-week summer immersion program for older siblings and alumni families as part of our efforts to increase our impact in the community. The program has sparked new partnerships and will include STEM workshops, art classes, and so much more.

Please enjoy the July issue of *The Power of Two*. I hope you will mark your calendars for our 8th Annual Twilight Tasting on October 13th to enjoy gourmet food and drink in support of Families Forward Learning Center – you won't want to miss it!

Hector LaFarga, Jr.
Executive Director

Teens Take the Lead at Families Forward

Each year, nearly 100 local middle and high school students participate in the Families Forward Teen Summer Volunteer Program. Participants in this immersive and fun opportunity spend one to two weeks volunteering in our classrooms to learn about early childhood education and share their talents with our students.

This summer, a group of our enthusiastic teen volunteers formed the first cohort of Teen Leads, a new addition to the volunteer program designed to provide leadership opportunities to youth that share a passion for service and community. Each individual has brought their unique strengths to the organization, enriching our classrooms

and serving as role models and mentors to their peers.

In the spring, the Teen Leads met to set goals for their new group and discuss how they could support the success of the Teen Summer Volunteer Program. Their planning culminated in three teen-led volunteer orientations, weekly volunteer appreciation lunches organized by the Leads, a fundraiser that has currently raised \$4,000, and plans for an end-of-summer celebration where each Teen Lead will get “pied” in the face for each \$100 they raised!

Olivia is a rising senior at Westridge School and was eager to join the first group of Teen Leads. “I really love

Families Forward, so I was excited about the opportunity to get more involved,” she shared. “So far, I’ve enjoyed getting the volunteers to interact with each other more and create more bonds.” Olivia has participated in our Teen Summer Volunteer Program for the past five years and often reflects on all she has learned since volunteering for the first time: “I’ve really grown passionate about equal access to education and I thank Families Forward for that exposure I wouldn’t have had otherwise.”

*- Sarah Kimbrough
Volunteer Coordinator*



PHOTO CAPTIONS: L _ RIGHT: TEEN LEAD OLIVIA POSES FOR A PHOTO WITH HER GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS. L _ LEFT: TEEN VOLUNTEER CAMILA SMILES WITH PETER IN THE OUTDOOR LEARNING CENTER. R _ LEFT: TEEN VOLUNTEER THEO READS TO TOAIA AND VICTORIA IN THE TWO-YEAR-OLD CLASSROOM. R _ RIGHT TOP ROW: TEEN VOLUNTEER GABY ENJOYS SENSORY PLAY IN THE SAND WITH SANTIAGO, R _ RIGHT BOTTOM ROW: TEEN VOLUNTEER ANDREW CELEBRATES INDEPENDENCE DAY WITH A GROUP OF STUDENTS IN PRESCHOOL.



An Alumna Gives Back

In June 2009, a young Camila Morales walked across the stage and received her Pre-K “graduation” certificate from Families Forward Learning Center. Camila was part of the first group of students to enroll at the new Family Learning Center on Fair Oaks Avenue. A decade later, Camila is now 14 years old and preparing to enter ninth grade at Pasadena High School. Helping others is a clear value of Camila’s, who is interested in pursuing a career in criminal justice and forensic science after she completes high school. She spent her first week of summer back where it all started: right here at Families Forward! Camila volunteered in the same room she played in as a child. “I thought it would be fun,” she said. “I remember volunteers came and they helped me, they were there for me. I want to do the same for these kids.”

On a Thursday afternoon in early June, Camila walks beside a line of eager preschoolers on their way to the library. One student has his hand in Camila’s, keeping step with her and smiling widely. “It makes me happy to see the kids happy and goofy because I remember being like that,” Camila says. “Getting to play with them makes me feel like a little kid again.” At the library, she sits on the carpet and sings along with the music, demonstrating the hand motions to the student sitting beside her. She’s beaming.

Camila has grown into a bright, curious, driven young woman, and she chalks that up to the years she spent at Families Forward. “They provided a great foundation for me,” she says. “They made me a better person, taught me to be kind and make friends. Families Forward will always be with me.” As our families with children in the Pre-K classroom prepare for their transition to elementary school, it is inspiring to get a glimpse of what life after Families Forward looks like for one of its former students. Thank you, Camila!

- Lily Ayau
Development Intern, Occidental College 19'

Twilight Tasting

EARLY BIRD
TICKETS
NOW
ON SALE!

UNLIMITED FOOD & DRINK FROM LOCAL RESTAURANTS WINE, BEER,
TEQUILA TASTING, SPECIALTY COCKTAILS LIVE MUSIC SILENT AUCTION

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Families
Forward
Learning Center

SAT
OCT
14TH
6-10

Families Forward Welcomes New Members to Board of Directors

Families Forward Learning Center is pleased to introduce the five exceptional individuals joining our Board of Directors in the 2018-2019 year!



Ruth Coyne is co-owner of Five Spokes Marketing and an active member of the Pasadena community. In addition to her accomplished career, Ruth has two daughters and serves in many parent leadership positions at their schools.



Sarah Campbell is the CFO for Sapphos Environmental, a Pasadena-based company. She has a background in business with an MBA from Washington University, and lives in Pasadena with her husband and son.



Robin Phillips is a Human Resources professional with a long history of dedication to philanthropic pursuits, serving in leadership positions at many organizations in Pasadena and beyond.



Liz Carlton is a business marketing professional who became involved with Families Forward over 20 years ago as a student volunteer. She currently serves as Regional Marketing Director for Panda Restaurant Group.



Marc Thomas is a Financial Advisor and Senior Portfolio Advisor for Merrill Lynch with nearly twenty-five years of experience in investment consulting. Marc is an outdoor enthusiast and lives in La Crescenta with his wife and daughter.



The Bridge to Success

Each year a very special, time-honored celebration is held at Families Forward Learning Center – our *Bridge to Success* Ceremony – which recognizes our Pre-K students as they complete their final year in our classrooms and enter elementary school. In June, more than 100 proud family members gathered in the brightly-lit atrium of our Early Childhood Education Center, eager to celebrate the 32 children enrolled in our Pre-K morning and afternoon programs. The festive occasion included special performances by the students, encouraging remarks from teachers and staff, and new backpacks filled with school supplies generously donated by the National Charity League.

For parents and teachers, this milestone is significant even beyond the excitement of a new chapter in the lives of their young learners. The *Bridge to Success* Ceremony also recognizes the parents' hard work as their child's first and most important teacher, and their own personal journey as Parent Participants at Families Forward. Children are ready and excited to take elementary school by storm, and their parents are equipped to support and advocate for them every step of the way.

Our mission as an organization is to prepare at-risk families to succeed in school and in life, and we are so proud to see them step into their bright future with the skills, resources, and confidence to achieve their dreams.

PHOTO CAPTIONS: LEFT: PARENT PARTICIPANT PERLA AND HER DAUGHTER MIA CELEBRATE AT THE "BRIDGE TO SUCCESS" CEREMONY. TOP ROW LEFT: DOMINIQUE SR. AND ARIANE ARE ALL SMILES WITH THEIR SON DOMINIQUE JR. TOP ROW RIGHT: PRE-K STUDENT SOFIA EXCITEDLY EXPLORES HER NEW BACKPACK FOR KINDERGARTEN. BOTTOM ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: PRE-K TEACHERS SANDRA MORA AND ROSA SANCHEZ, EDUCATION DIRECTOR JULIE ESPINOZA, SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER ANDREA HUICOCHEA, FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST PAOLA RODRIGUEZ, AND PRE-K TEACHER MARISELA PEREZ.

Thank You to the Families Forward GUARDIANS

The Guardians provide sustaining support for our programs and operations by donating \$1,000 or more to our annual fund.

Peggy Adams & Joel Edstrom
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Julie & Scott Ward
Katie Rothenberg Wei & Alex Wei
Judith & John Whiting
Cindy & George Wiley
Alyce de Roulet Williamson
Judy & Randy Wilson



LAUGH FOR A CAUSE!

Join us on August 5th for a special fundraiser in partnership with Ice House Comedy Club! Emmy Award-winning broadcast journalist and comedian Fritz Coleman will perform. Proceeds from the event will benefit Families Forward Learning Center.

Sunday, August 5th at 7pm

Ice House Comedy Club

Visit icehousecomedy.com to purchase tickets

Please use promo code [FFLC78](#) at checkout



JOIN US FOR A TOUR

The best way to learn about what happens at Families Forward is to visit our Center and take a guided tour with staff.

Tuesday, August 7 – 9:30am

Thursday, August 9 – 3pm

Tuesday, September 4 – 9:30am

Thursday, September 6 – 3pm

Tuesday, October 2 – 9:30am

To RSVP or for more info call (626) 792-2687 ext. 122 or email Berit@FamiliesForwardLC.org.



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Our Mission & Guiding Principles

Families Forward Learning Center prepares families living in isolation and poverty to succeed in school and in life through two-generation learning programs. Our programs are built on two guiding principles: in order for significant, long-term change to occur within a family, you must reach both parent and child and educate them together; and, the most critical time to reach a family is when children are proven to be most vulnerable and impressionable, between birth and 5 years-old.

The Power of Two-Generation Learning

We fulfill our mission by providing FREE programs to disadvantaged families with children ages 0-5. Our two-generation learning model helps parents and children gain the knowledge, skills and confidence they will need to break out of poverty. National research and our own evaluation results confirm that increasing the education levels of both a parent and their child is an irrefutable way to promote long-term, positive change within a family and a community.



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hector LaFarga, Jr.
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 Editor: Berit Anderson

FAMILIES FORWARD LEARNING Center is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Tax ID 23-7275324

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