

THE POWER OF TWO ISSUE 36 SUMMER 2019

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Alumni Spotlight: From Families Forward to Georgetown

In the May 2009 edition of The Power of Two, an article highlighted the success of Marina Bendy, a parent participant at Families Forward. In 2008, Marina earned her GED after studying for nearly two years and had begun taking classes at Pasadena City College to fulfill her dream of one day being an early childhood educator. Today, Marina has been a teacher at Families Forward for almost ten years. Marina's tenacity and drive is reflected in the incredible accomplishments of her daughter, Elisia.

For both Marina and Elisia, education is of primary importance. Like her mother, Elisia has also been involved with Families Forward for many years, enrolling with her mother when she was just four months old. According to Marina, this quality early childhood education allowed Elisia to start developing socially and emotionally and offered her a jump start in life. When Elisia was old enough, she began volunteering with Families Forward throughout the year. "These experiences opened my mind to the importance of helping others," Elisia remembers.

Elisia thrived as she continued on in her education. When she was a sophomore in high school, she was chosen as her school's sole representative to attend a leadership conference in central California. As a senior, Elisia was voted prom queen and earned the honor of Salutatorian of her graduating class. She is now preparing to tackle her next big adventure: attending Georgetown University this fall!

Elisia plans to earn her degree in sociology, build a career working in politics, and perhaps run for office someday. No matter where her education leads her, she hopes to continue to serve others and fight for social justice. As she prepares to start the next chapter in her life, Elisia credits her mother, Marina, as her role model. She can clearly remember the years when Marina attended classes at Pasadena City College to make her own dreams a reality. Elisia shares, "Mom works so hard and is so selfless in how she cares for others. Her empathy, commitment, and work ethic are so inspiring to me." As for Marina, she hopes that Elisia will continue to pursue her dreams in education and find a job doing something that she loves.

Marina and Elisia, your Families Forward community is so inspired by your hard work and success! We can't wait to see all that you accomplish in the future!

PHOTO CAPTION: MARINA BENDY, LEFT, SMILES WITH HER DAUGHTERS AT ELISIA'S HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.

From Preschoolers to Paleontologists

Upon entering the Preschool classroom at Families Forward Learning Center, visitors are immediately transported 350 million years into the past to the Mesozoic Era, or the age of the dinosaurs. Nests of paper maché dinosaur eggs decorate bookshelves, rows of Triceratops and Tyrannosaurus Rex bones hang from the ceiling, and the classroom walls are covered with colorful drawings and images of dinosaurs.

These projects are part of a larger STEM educational curriculum designed by Denisse Garcia and Susana Rivera, teachers in the Preschool classroom. In February, both Garcia and Rivera attended a CalTech STEM conference for early childhood education teachers and have been incorporating what they gleaned into new STEM curriculum for their young students.

This long-term focus on dinosaurs was first developed in response to the children's preexisting fascination with them. Prompted by the children's curiosity, Garcia and Rivera began to develop new activities and lessons that would address this burgeoning interest.

For Garcia, one of the highlights of the dinosaur STEM series has been witnessing the children's excitement to be learning about a

topic they are so enthusiastically interested in. New curriculum developed by the teachers included an excavation activity, which utilized classroom tools to break through ice and clay and discover hidden fossils inside. The teachers also created a 'Discovery Center' where children could investigate their questions about dinosaurs independently. The 'Discovery Center' included books, pictures, magnifying glasses, and a small excavation site: it was an immediate success. According to Garcia, "As soon as children walked into the classroom, they went straight to the Discovery Center and started to draw pictures of what they saw. One little boy even stayed at the station for almost an hour!"

Thanks to the tireless efforts of our teachers, there is a new crop of eager scientists ready to take on the world. When asked, "Who wants to be a paleontologist?" every little hand instantly shoots into the air as the Preschoolers shout, "Me! Me! Me!"

Watch out, dinosaurs! A new generation of young scientists is on the way.





Crossing the *Bridge to Success*

Each year a 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, over one hundred 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 holds a significance even beyond the excitement of a new chapter in the lives of their young learners. The *Bridge to Success* Ceremony is in recognition of a parent's hard work in being their child's first and most important teacher and their own personal journey as a Parent Participant at Families Forward. Children are ready and excited to take Preschool 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 our greatest pride is to see them step into their bright future with the skills, resources, and confidence to achieve their dreams.

PHOTO CAPTIONS: L _ RIGHT: SEYON STUDIES A DINOSAUR SPECIMEN IN THE PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM. L _ LEFT: PRESCHOOL STUDENT CHRISTOPHER MAKES NEW DISCOVERIES IN A CLASSROOM-SIZED EXCAVATION SITE. R _ TOP ROW LEFT: THE LEE FAMILY CELEBRATES THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE BRIDGE TO SUCCESS CEREMONY. R _ TOP ROW RIGHT: PRE-K TEACHERS SANDRA, MARICELA, AND ROSA ARE ALL SMILES AS THEIR STUDENTS MAKE THE BIG STEP TO KINDERGARTEN. R _ BOTTOM ROW LEFT: THE PRE-K STUDENTS PERFORM A SPECIAL SONG FOR THEIR FAMILIES. R _ BOTTOM ROW RIGHT: THE PLASCENCIA FAMILY BEAMS WITH PRIDE AS THEY CROSS THE "BRIDGE TO SUCCESS."

Twilight Tasting

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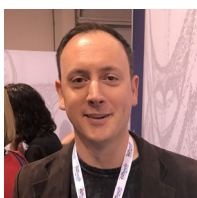
Families Forward Welcomes New Members to Board of Directors



Maria Teresa "Maite" Bernath has worked in secondary and higher education for over 10 years. She currently teaches Spanish at Polytechnic School in Pasadena, where she serves as Chair of the World Languages Department. A native of Malaga, Spain, Maite holds a law degree as well as a Ph.D in Spanish Literature.



Teresa Fuller is a top real estate broker with Compass Pasadena. In addition to her work in real estate, she has volunteered extensively and held numerous board leadership positions at organizations including Pacific Oaks, Vox Femina Los Angeles, and the National Charity League.



Richard Childs is Vice President of shopDisney. A chartered accountant with an education in science, Richard has been with Disney for 19 years, holding roles in retail finance, real estate, e-commerce, and more. Richard moved from his London, his hometown, to the United States in 2008 and now resides in Altadena with his family.



Michelle Harrington built a successful career as a certified public accountant and recently retired from her title as Chief Financial Officer at a local geophysical company. Michelle's community involvement has included board service at numerous schools as well as an organization that provides psychotherapy services to low-income patients.

PHOTO CAPTIONS: R _ LEFT: FAMILIES FORWARD PARENT PARTICIPANTS GATHER AROUND THE SOCIAL KITCHEN TABLE WITH AUTHOR AND BLOGGER ELISA CALLOW.
R _ TOP RIGHT: ELISA SHARES HER STORY WITH GUARDIANS AND FRIENDS OF FAMILIES FORWARD ON JUNE 20TH. R _ BOTTOM RIGHT: ELISA AND PARENT PARTICIPANTS
KARLA, GABRIELA, BEATRICE, DANITZIA, BLANCA, AND ROSA SHOW OFF THEIR BEAUTIFUL BAKED GOODS

Foraging for Community

Families Forward is no stranger to the scent of delicious home-cooking wafting throughout our learning center. From enchiladas to chicken mole, our parent participants have prepared some truly mouthwatering dishes in our communal kitchen. Last month, Families Forward parents were presented with the unique opportunity to become cooking students themselves when Elisa Callow, food blogger and author of the new cookbook *The Urban Forager: Culinary Exploring & Cooking on L.A.'s Eastside*, held a baking workshop in our learning center.

On June 19th, the class baked two delicious cookie recipes from *The Urban Forager* in the Families Forward "social kitchen." During the workshop, Elisa provided participants with many tips and insights gleaned from years of culinary exploration. But it wasn't only the mothers who learned something new at the workshop. Elisa was effusive in her praise of the parent participants' method and skill, laughingly saying, "I feel like I am learning more from them than they are from me!"

The delicious treats baked at the workshop were served the following day at an event for Families Forward guardians and supporters, which Elisa attended as the evening's featured speaker. Sharing her story with more than 70 guests, she discussed the significance of being an "urban forager" in Los Angeles and the importance of creating community through food and cooking.

Indeed, the cookies at the event were powerful evidence for the truth behind her words. Not only had Elisa and the parent participants baked together, they also created a community in the kitchen of Families Forward together.



Thank You to the Families Forward

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

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Become a volunteer at Families Forward during our 2019-2020 program year!

Weekend and weekday opportunities are available for individuals, families, and corporate groups.

**For more information, please visit
www.familiesforwardLC.org/get-involved/**



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 6 – 9:30am

Thursday, August 8 – 3pm

Tuesday, September 3 – 9:30am

Thursday, September 12 – 3pm

Tuesday, October 1 – 9:30am

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