



## Don't Forget About Me Exploring Challenges Facing Our Foster Youth in the Education System

Saturday, March 2nd 2019  
8:00 a.m. doors / 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. programming  
Immaculate Heart Middle and High School Campus

### PROGRAM

8:00 a.m. Doors Open

9:00 a.m. Welcome  
Karla Diaz Sayles, President, Junior League of Los Angeles

9:10 a.m. Impact Moment  
Presenter: Jesse Aguiar and Carmen Noyola, Journey House Inc.  
An activity that highlights the unique and often intersectional challenges foster youth face when navigating the education system.

9:35 a.m. Keynote, "Making Change"  
Speaker: Senator Holly J. Mitchell, Representative from California's 30<sup>th</sup> State Senate District  
The Senator will discuss her sponsorship of SB1083 and her advocacy in government on behalf of foster children, families, and women. She will share her journey in politics and how to stay true to your ideology while working within any challenging and shifting landscape; followed by Q&A

10:10 a.m. Coffee Break

10:25 a.m. Featured Panel, Advocating Through Legislation  
Moderator: Jesse Aguiar, Director of Statewide Policy, Journey House Inc.  
Panel on advocating for foster youth presented by former foster youth; followed by Q&A

11:25 a.m. - 12:10 p.m. Breakout Sessions

12:15 p.m. Call-to-Action  
Buffany Hunter, Civic Leadership Forum Chair, Junior League of Los Angeles

12:30 p.m. Program Ends

## DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM

### **VOTE! ADVOCATING THROUGH LEGISLATION**

with moderator Jesse Aguiar from Journey House

- Discover programs for foster youth that guide them through the transition from childhood into adult life.
- Learn how to navigate the legislation system to get your voice heard.
- Understand how to interact with elected officials.

Journey House's Beyond Foster Care Campaign seeks to improve the life-long trajectory of former foster youth in California through advocacy. Building on Journey House's long-standing commitment to support foster youth in education, the campaign is focused on creating statewide solutions to improve education outcomes for all former foster youth.

Beyond Foster Care works with a wide range of community-based partners, educational institutions, and TAY- Transition Age Youth serving programs to identify and mobilize actions that improve foster youth's overall education experiences. They host workshops, panels, and roundtable discussions with stakeholders to discuss the needs of former foster youth who are aging out of foster care. Their objective is to improve programs and services for older foster youth who no longer qualify for support. Journey House seeks to challenge the Transition Age Youth framework through dialogue and concrete action.

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS

### **OPTION 1: ORGANIZE! RALLY THE TROOPS! - ORGANIZING YOUR COMMUNITY**

led by Kristina F. Bigdeli Director of Campaigns, Field First

- Learn about civic engagement, and how you can be an active participant.
- Introduction to advocacy.
- Navigate your community's political landscape.

### **OPTION 2: VOLUNTEER! WORKING DIRECTLY WITH FOSTER YOUTH**

led by Carolyn McGee, Advocacy Team Manager, CASA of Los Angeles & Sam Herod Volunteer, CASA of Los Angeles

- Learn how individuals can work directly with foster youth and the educational system.
- Hear from local non-profit, CASA of Los Angeles discuss in-depth, their work on Education Rights, and volunteer opportunities for you.

CASA of Los Angeles improves the lives of children in the dependency system by pairing them with trained volunteer advocates. They specially work on helping provide court appointed special advocates (or CASA's).

### **OPTION 3: BUILD! Corporate-Community Engagement + Scholars Program Deep Dive**

led by Carla Palmer, Senior Manager of Corporate and Community Engagement & Hannah Olade, College Counselor, from United Friends of the Children

- Learn how to get involved with advocating for foster youth when you're a busy person.
- Discussion on how to lead corporate and social responsibility efforts.
- Discussion on United Friends' program offering an 11-year education support continuum.

United Friends of the Children empowers current and former foster youth on their journey to self-sufficiency through service-enriched education and housing programs, advocacy, and consistent relationships with a community of people who care.

### **OPTION 4: YES! FINDING YOUR FIT IN ADVOCACY**

led by Lisa Pinto, Child Welfare Deputy for LA County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl

- Learn about the advocacy sources in your area and how to utilize them.
- Recognize your passion and how to share it with the community.
- Discussion on how government offices can aide in your advocacy work and learn more about the resources they offer.



## OPTION 5: CONNECT! IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES THROUGH (ACEs) NETWORKS

led by Lara Kain, Educator, Consultant, and National Speaker from ACE's Connection

- Understand Adverse Childhood Experiences, Trauma, and Resilience
- Discussion on the concepts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Toxic Stress, Trauma, and Resilience in relation to the educational experience of foster youth.

ACEs Connection is a social network that supports communities to accelerate the global ACEs science movement, recognizes the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in shaping adult behavior and health, and promotes trauma-informed and resilience-building practices and policies in all communities and institutions -- from schools to prisons to hospitals and churches -- to help heal and develop resilience instead of traumatizing already traumatized people.

## OPTION 6: SHARE! FIND YOUR VOICE! SOCIAL MEDIA 101

led by Madison Pontz, Development Associate from the Feminist Majority Foundation

- Hear personal experiences for managing social media in politics, for-profits, and nonprofits.
- Utilize social media to amplify your message and learn social media basics.
- Learn how to develop graphics and create content to effectively share and re-share posts

## **SPEAKER BIOS**

**Senator Holly J. Mitchell** is a third-generation native Angeleno, and the proud daughter of career public servants and the protégé of community leaders who instilled in her a passion for service. She continued her family legacy of “firsts” when she was named the first African American to chair the powerful Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee in December 2016. Less than two months later, a profile in The Los Angeles Times described Mitchell as “the Legislature’s moral compass.”

She proved to be just that in 2017 and 2018 when she oversaw the adoption of consecutive state budgets of nearly \$200 billion each and won wide praise for directing funds to elementary and college students, the health-care systems and long-neglected programs to assist infants, the elderly, youth and working families.

In recognition of her work, the five-member Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors last November presented her with its Distinguished Legislator Award.

Mitchell, the mother of a teenage son, has devoted her professional life to creating a California where all children thrive. She has led the charge to reform the criminal and juvenile justice systems, expand access to healthcare, early care and education, foster care, secure women’s reproductive health and end the trafficking of minors. She is a passionate defender of women’s rights and the environment.

**Jesse Aguiar** has worked on various local and statewide reform efforts in criminal justice, K-12 education, foster care, and higher education for the past ten years. Currently, he is the Director of Beyond Foster Care at Journey House. BFC is a grassroots advocacy campaign that empowers former foster youth to develop leadership skills through advocacy. Recently, BFC expanded the age limit for the Chafee grant scholarship from 22 to 26 years of age, and added an additional \$4 million dollars to the programs annual budget. BFC aims to create safety nets for older foster youth through systems change.

**Kristina F. Bigdeli** (she/her/hers), is known for electing Democrats, organizing communities, managing campaigns, and mentoring young women leaders. She served as the California Democratic Party’s GOTV Director in the 25th District, electing Katie Hill to Congress and flipping the Republican-held seat. She was also the GOTV Director for Katie Hill’s narrow primary victory, as well as Campaign Manager for Coastal Commissioner Roberto Uranga’s re-election to Long Beach City Council. She currently manages Lena Gonzalez’s campaign for State Senate.

On the East Coast, Kristina served as Deputy GOTV Director on Ayanna Pressley's historic congressional campaign in 2018, Field Director for Martha Coakley's 2014 gubernatorial campaign, Deputy Field Director for Ed Markey's 2013 special election to the U.S. Senate, and Data Director and Regional Field Director on President Obama's re-election in 2012. She was recognized as the "most effective border staff nationwide" for the number of volunteers mobilized to New Hampshire.

On the national level, Kristina served as Managing Director for Stronger U.S. and Stronger U.S. Education Fund, 501(c)3/c(4) that focused on building power in underrepresented communities and measuring the impact of community organizing on voter turnout. As Deputy Regional Director for Northeastern States at Organizing for Action, she oversaw 12 staff on 8 issue campaigns to pressure 29 Members of Congress by leveraging coalitions and building high capacity grassroots infrastructure. She also served on President Obama's Inaugural Committee in 2013, organizing thousands of representatives from all over the United States to march in the Inaugural Parade.

Kristina holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Italian from University of California, Los Angeles, where she studied feminist Italian literature. A proud first generation American of Italian and Iranian descent, she lives with her fiancé Kasey and their dog Tini in Long Beach, CA.

**Sam Herod** has been a volunteer for CASA of Los Angeles, since 2003. During his time as a volunteer, Samuel has served as a CASA for over 20 young people. He focuses on transitional age youth because he sees in them the opportunity to make the biggest impact. In 2015 Samuel was awarded the prestigious G.F. Bettineski Child Advocate of the Year award by the National CASA Association in recognition of his significant contributions toward promoting the best interests of children who have experienced abuse and neglect. He was also awarded the Carl and Roberta Deutsch Foundation Halo Award and the Los Angeles Business Journal Non-Profit Corporate Citizenship Award.

In addition to his work with CASA, Samuel is a board member of the RightWay Foundation, which specializes in job placement for youth in foster care. He co-founded the Bidly Mason Charitable Foundation, a faith-based nonprofit created to educate the greater Los Angeles community about the plight of children aging out of foster care. After 30 plus years in the entertainment industry Samuel retired from the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, to work as director of transitional age youth for Art + Practice, a nonprofit started by the artist Mark Bradford to empower transitional age youth to become critical thinkers and creative producers through contemporary visual arts.

**Lara Kain** is an experienced educator, consultant, and national speaker on implementing ACEs science and trauma-informed practices into schools and communities, with a focus on building holistic trauma-responsive systems.

She brings over two decades of experience at the local, state, and national level. Before joining ACEs Connection, she developed trauma-informed community schools in Los Angeles, worked for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction supporting school improvement and as the state homeless coordinator, and — her first love — teaching 'at-risk' youth.

Her wide range of experience — from supporting individual teachers in the classroom to designing a trauma-informed schools pilot currently being implemented in 20 schools across the country leads — her to understand the macro and the micro. She has worked both as a teacher and administrator putting the science of building resilience into practice. She has a B.A. in education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Masters in Public Administration from The Evergreen State College.

As a trauma survivor and 'at-risk' youth herself, and then an educator for 'at-risk' youth in Washington State, this work is deeply personal. She is a mom to two adopted boys, which greatly personalizes her understanding of developmental trauma and what it takes to overcome. Lara originally hails from the Midwest; she spent over a decade in the Pacific Northwest, and now lives in sunny Southern California with her husband and two sons. The beach is her happy place.

**Carolyn McGee** is an Advocacy Team Manager with CASA of Los Angeles. Before coming to CASA of Los Angeles, Carolyn worked for Easter Seals and was a Detention Officer at Sylmar Juvenile Hall. Carolyn has enjoyed working with CASA of Los Angeles for over 18 years. The one thing that attracted Carolyn to the CASA of Los Angeles organization was its mission. To help improve the lives of children, and to help advocate for safe, permanent and nurturing homes.

Carolyn holds a Bachelor's degree in Human Services and a Master's in Conflict Mediation with a concentration in Behavioral Science from Cal State Dominguez Hills.

In her spare time, she enjoys reading, traveling, providing school supplies for underprivileged children, volunteering to feed the homeless and she is also involved in wildlife conservation programs as a way of showing her love for nature, animals and the outdoors.

**Lucero Noyola** is receiving her Master's in Social Work from the University of Southern California. She is a rising scholar and advocate for the foster care community who previously worked as the Program Manager of Journey House's Beyond Foster Care Campaign. In her role, she helped lead the campaign's research and policy initiatives. Lucero's goal is to bridge her interests in higher education, policy advocacy, and philanthropy.

**Hannah Olade** is a College Counselor at United Friends of the Children. She has a background in psychology and career development. For over 12 years, she has been working at United Friends, supporting students to help them become more confident in who they are as individuals. Hannah enjoys leading students to successful college graduation and professional workforce.

**Carla Palmer**, a 15 year veteran at United Friends, works to build a bridge of collaboration with corporations desiring to impact social change. With over 18 years in the non-profit sector, Carla has helped connect employees from companies like HBO, Cox, Castle & Nicholson., L.A. Care, Wells Fargo, Warner Bros, and others to be a part of the solution to the education and homeless crisis that highly impacts youth in the foster care system in Los Angeles County. More than ever, corporate partnerships have aided in the pursuit of social good. Please join us by becoming a "FRIEND" at United Friends.

**Lisa Pinto** is the Child Welfare Deputy for Supervisor Kuehl. She began her legal career as an attorney working in the Los Angeles County Dependency Court system representing neglected and abused children.

Prior to joining Supervisor Kuehl, Lisa served as the District Director to two successive Members of Congress in West Los Angeles. Congressman Henry Waxman and Congressman Ted Lieu. In her capacity as District Director, Lisa was solely responsible for developing and overseeing constituent outreach, field operations and community engagement programs. She acted as a senior advisor, contributing to the strategy and mission of both Members of Congress. Lisa was also the surrogate for Congressmen Waxman and Lieu, responding to and resolving regional issues and acting as the point of contact for elected officials, federal agencies and community leaders.

Lisa graduated from UCLA with a Bachelor of Arts degree in history and a concentration in Business Administration. She earned her J.D. from the University of California, Davis. Lisa lives in Los Angeles with her daughter, Stella

**Madison Pontz** has on-the-ground campaign experience and expertise in editorial writing and real-time social media management. She has previously worked as the Social Media & Marketing Manager for a woman-owned, LA-based small business.

## **JUNIOR LEAGUE OF LOS ANGELES**

The Junior League of Los Angeles is an organization of women committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women and to improving the community through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable.

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