

RISE



Newsletter for StandUp for Kids - Orange County

HOW CAN YOU HELP THIS HOLIDAY SEASON?

There are many ways to get involved!

As we near the holidays and year-end, it's a great time to reflect on our year. Individually and organizationally, we've been through a lot. Though times have been difficult, we have a lot to be grateful for. YOU are one of the reasons that StandUp for Kids is grateful. Without you and people like you, we would not exist, and the life-changing stories of our youth would not be.

Please get involved with our year-end and year-round initiatives. We have a Turkey dinner initiative for Thanksgiving and an Adopt-A-Youth program for the holidays. We are always looking for one-time and on-going volunteers to host virtual lunches, sort and deliver food to our kids, be virtual mentors and tutors and support our monthly giving campaign to ensure our services are there when our kids need them.

If you, your company/church/school, or someone you know would like to get involved, please email orangecounty@standupforkids.org today!



Out now on iTunes, Spotify and Google Podcasts. Search "ListenUp - The StandUp for Kids Podcast".

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Programming: What's New

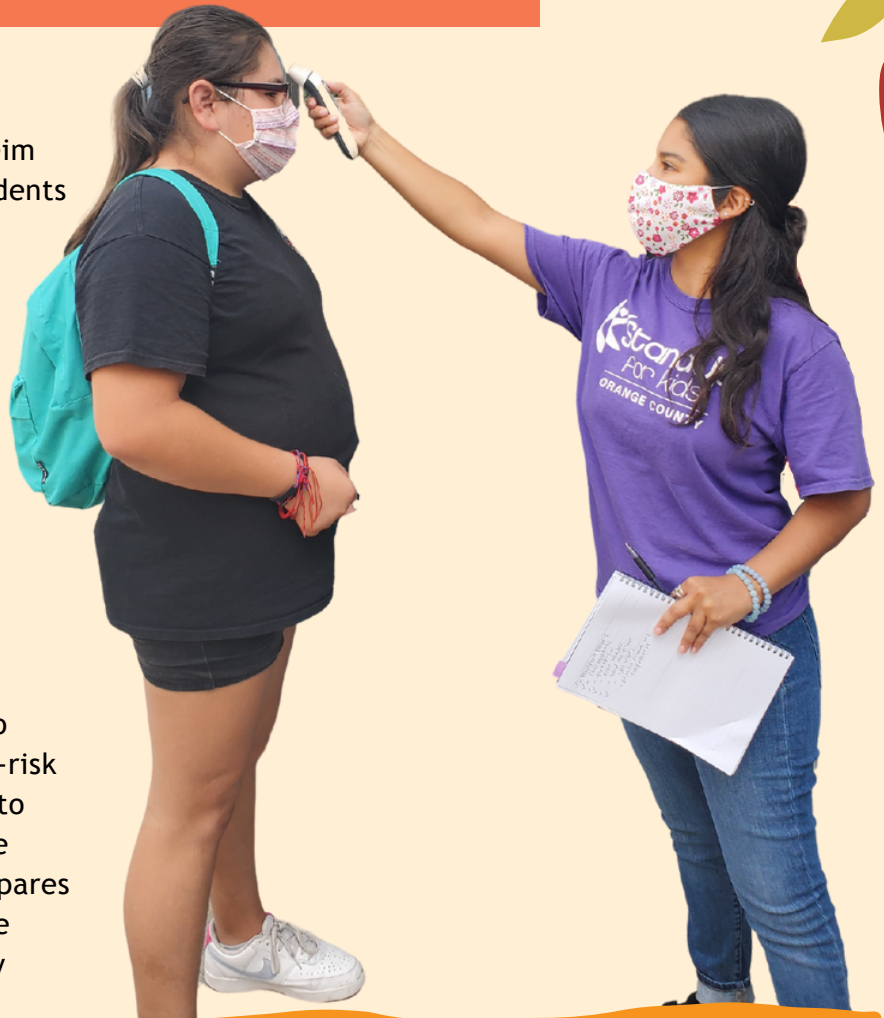


Anaheim Center: We're Back!

We returned with limited access at our Anaheim facility where we help our 12-18 year-old students with homework, provide mentoring and basic needs and are a source of love and care for our kids. Our virtual tutoring and mentoring programs are still running, providing constant support, but having socially distanced in-person programming two afternoons a week is a massive boost to our kids, getting to see their fellow students and hanging with their favorite purple champion, Programs Manager Xiomara Orozco.

STEM Program Re-Launch

Our new Virtual Learning platform is meant to eliminate the barriers facing homeless and at-risk students by providing opportunities for them to explore STEM and computing occupations. The program goal is for youth to research and prepares them for STEM-focused college paths, improve college and career aspirations, and ultimately provide a way to a STEM career.



VIRTUAL GALA SUMMARY

A special thank you to everyone who donated, volunteered, shared, and made our 2020 Virtual Gala a success! The total amount raised exceeded \$60,000, and 95% of these funds will go directly to housing and helping our youth. Sincerest thanks to YOU for making this possible.

A big thanks to Advisory Board members Nishant Kumar and Shadi Shaffer for hosting a fantastic event.

+ YOUTH STORIES

+ Our youth have overcome many difficulties. These are their stories of hope and tenacity.

"They're always there to help you with whatever you need - whenever you need anything...they prepare you for the future."

NATZUMY'S STORY



At first glance, Natzumy seems shy -- but she is not as shy as she used to be. Natzumy started attending StandUp for Kids meetings when she was 14 years old, and at first, she was nervous because she did not know anyone. This changed once she was introduced to the volunteers. "I felt safe with StandUp for Kids," says Natzumy when reflecting back on her first encounter with the staff in 7th grade. Natzumy has always had a passion for learning but has struggled since her parents predominantly speak Spanish. StandUp for Kids helps support Natzumy every week and supports her plans to become a doctor or veterinarian.

RJ'S STORY

"I didn't trust people and looked at them as enemies. StandUp for Kids was able to help me build back my character traits and a sense of trust. It's like a new life." - RJ

RJ grew up in the foster care system, and although he was adopted into a family, his home never felt like home. Feelings of isolation and loneliness were pervasive for him. RJ decided to leave his family and move to California when he was 17 years old. He continued to feel like he was not in a good place and his substance abuse only worsened, forcing him to live on the streets. A few years later, RJ was able to turn his life around by getting sober and getting the help he needed. RJ has recently been housed by StandUp for Kids' Rapid Re-Housing program and is currently studying at Golden West community college. RJ has been sober for a little over five months, has many goals in life, and is taking steps in the right direction to achieve those goals. He believes that if he can get through adversity, others can too. RJ's purpose in life is to leave something behind. With his positive attitude in life and his perseverance, there is no doubt that he will do just that.



ADDRESSING MYTHS ABOUT YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness among youth populations has been growing in recent years -- but not for the reasons people may think. Youth encounter many issues that lead to homelessness and the perils that come with it. Listed below are some of the harmful myths that revolve around our youth. We hear directly from the youth of StandUp for Kids - Orange County, who give their own personal stories rebuking these myths.

Myth #1: Homeless youth are responsible for their own poverty.

After Michelle's father divorced her mother, who struggled with addiction, her father relocated her family to Orange County. During this time, her family was homeless or living in temporary housing. After her father was hospitalized with diabetes and required constant care, Michelle traveled back and forth daily to care for him. As a result, she lost her job and ultimately ended up homeless.



Michelle's Story



Alex's Story

Myth #2: Homeless youth can just go home.

Alex's parents struggled with substance abuse - his mother battling an opioid addiction, his father, an alcoholic. His father's mistreatment of oxycontin contributed to his violent abuse towards the family. This environment of substance abuse led Alex to follow his parents' path. Alex was the only child living in the home with them at age ten, which made him the main target of abuse. Starting in middle school, he was kicked out of the house by his father repeatedly and brought back by his mother. He would sleep at a friend's house on the streets, under bridges, or under highways during these times and going home was not a safe option.

Myth #3: Homeless youth are responsible for drug addiction.

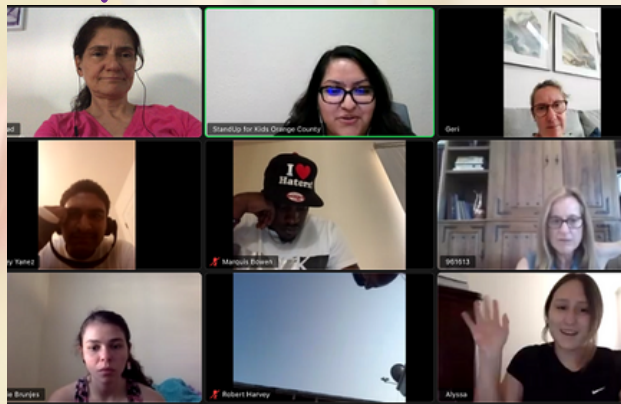
Jacob already had Attention Deficit Disorder and Bipolar Disorder. As a result of growing up in an abusive and alcohol-driven environment. On the streets, he began to also suffer from depression, which led him to spiral into the drinking and use of cocaine.



Jacob's Story

Read more about each story on our blog at www.standupforkids.org/orangecounty/news

Neil
↓



“This organization was my first experience with helping homeless youth and I know they are truly making an impact. I’m happy to be a part of the team.” - Neil

THANK YOU WALMART AND NEIL!

StandUp for Kids - Orange County would like to highlight one of our most recent corporate partners, Walmart, and the dedication their employees have in giving back to their community. The fuel for the partnership came from Neil Sarreshteh, an employee with Walmart for the last 21 years and currently the E-Commerce Manager for 18 stores in southern California. Neil has also been volunteering for StandUp for Kids for the past year, working directly with homeless youth in the 18-24 age range.

Walmart was a Gold sponsor for our virtual gala this past September and the excitement for supporting philanthropic causes and raising money comes largely from Walmart associates like Neil. A big thank you!

SHOUT OUT TO FAIRMONT PREPARATORY ACADEMY!

Fairmont Preparatory Academy reaches a hand out to StandUp for Kids

Each day, StandUp for Kids - Orange County strives to make a difference in the lives of homeless and underprivileged youth. One partnership involves Fairmont Preparatory Academy. One of the initiatives that have made this collaboration so successful is the Brown Bag lunch program. The idea of establishing a plan to provide lunches for homeless youth first originated from Leela, then a freshman student at the academy. Leela would then create a club helping students get involved with preparing meals for those in need.

Students of the Food Served Here club are responsible for collecting and preparing the lunches before they are picked up by StandUp for Kids staff members and delivered to the youth. The operation has grown exponentially over the past four years, helping bag around eighty lunches a month. It’s a partnership that those at Fairmont Prep are eager to continue, as such experiences have helped students gain a greater understanding of the issue of youth homelessness.



“We would love to continue to support the mission of ending youth homelessness as much as we can and to help spread that message to the students so that they understand and become global citizens when they graduate.”

- Director of Community Service at Fairmont Preparatory Academy, Anna Kunkle

SUPERSTAR SPOTLIGHT

A shoutout and big thank you to some of our biggest supporters!

The phrase "not all heroes wear capes" definitely applies to Valerie Venegas. Valerie has been a volunteer since May and has been helping out with the We Deliver program by packing food. She can understand the struggles of the people she helps because she had to overcome many obstacles. When she was at her lowest point and wanted to give up, she found a source of comfort in God, concluding that there would be better times ahead. When reflecting on her struggles and where she is now, she said, "...that is life, we will all have struggles. But do we let those struggles defeat us? We sometimes defeat ourselves, so we have to find what we can do to twist that around and give back, move forward, and make a difference." Thanks, Valerie!



Martalinda grew up dealing with housing instability, moving multiple times to lower-income communities. Faced with circumstances where others would find only despair, Marta found a dream. Her hardships inspired her to embark on a journey to build up others and provide for them what couldn't be provided to her when growing up. While at college, she sought out internships that would help her advance in her career field and put her closer to achieving her dream. She found that opportunity with StandUp for Kids. Marta helps youth by guiding them through their struggles while also providing them with the tools they need to create their success in life. The ability to improve oneself by helping others is a trait we much admire at StandUp for Kids. We are honored to have Marta working alongside us. Thanks, Marta!

StandUp for Kids has been hard at work to help homeless youth this year, especially with the pandemic. Volunteer Kim Pennington has been a critical contributor to our work. Kim has lived her whole life in Huntington Beach and is married with two kids. Her kids were raised in a very fortunate situation but still had their struggles. Kim started wondering what it must be like for less fortunate kids. Kim searched, looking for a way to make a difference and reached out to StandUp for Kids in January. Since then, Kim has been doing as much as she can to help out, despite the ongoing pandemic. From helping with events to doing food deliveries to organizational support, Kim has been helping out in any way she can. Thank you, Kim!



You can read all of these stories and more at our blog here: standupforkids.org/orangecounty/news

EXPANDING OUR HOUSING IMPACT

Our housing program seeks to help place our youths in stable long-term living situations and give them the resources to succeed. StandUp for Kids recognizes that it isn't enough to find housing for our youth. It's about ensuring that we continue to be supportive even after we house our youth. This has been a core of our mission for many years and has helped countless youth put a roof over their heads and find a brighter path forward.

To take on this mission, we brought in two talented individuals, Arlene Rangel and Stephanny Razo. For Arlene, the subject of homelessness is also a personal matter: Arlene witnessed her father battle against homelessness. "There was this whole world of people who are just trying to get housed and find stability," said Arlene.

For Stephanny, there has always existed a desire to help those in need and she has previously worked with special needs kids; but there was one particular experience that drove Stephanny to get involved with StandUp for Kids. One day, one of the youth group members spoke to her about how he ended up at the hospital, first losing his parents and then becoming homeless because of depression. This was one experience that taught Stephanny the necessity of emotional support and mentorship for youths.

For Arlene and Stephanny, the tremendous progress made thus far with this program is just the beginning. We are excited to have them on our team, as they work to understand the county systems and forge relationships with trusted housing providers in Orange County.



WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

Living in Orange County can be challenging: from finding affordable housing to buying expensive furniture, it can be a nightmare to do everything yourself. So, when Marquis and his daughter needed help moving into his apartment, three worlds collided.

Marquis (top left) is a former homeless youth and now a mentor at StandUp for Kids. Through hardship and perseverance, he has come a long way to finding a place to call home. Geri (bottom left), a volunteer and donor, was moving. Thus the timing was perfect for her to make the substantial gift of many pieces of furniture. Storm (not pictured), a former youth in our program, volunteered to be a delivery man. This brought together Storm, Geri, and Marquis.

Whether donating furniture, mentoring, or teaching, Geri is no stranger to rolling up her sleeves. She's helped countless people all across the U.S. On move-in day, Storm came right on time and helped move the big pieces onto his truck with Geri's husband, Scott. An cumulative effort between Justine, Geri, Storm and Marquis, and one that reinforces that we're all in this together. Helping those that need a nudge from time to time is a gratifying experience that does change lives and life trajectories one small step at a time. A big thank you to all of our donors and volunteers for doing small and big things every day for our youth. Together we can make incremental changes that ultimately change and save lives.





ORANGE COUNTY

4th Quarter Newsletter

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TikTok: @standupforkidsoc



One life at a time.



If you are experiencing homelessness in the Orange County area and are between the ages of 12 and 24, please call our hotline at (714) 356-5437

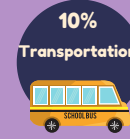


#ENDYOUTHHOMELESSNESS



DONATE NOW

WWW.STANDUPFORKIDS.ORG/ORANGECOUNTY/DONATE



The impact your dollar has on our youth

95% of total expenses are fueled into one of six categories that impact the future of our youth



**LOOK FOR AMAZON
US ON SMILE!**