



From the

Directors

The ultimate American dream is owning your own home – with a white picket fence and a dog in the back yard! Everybody has their dream of what their ideal home would look like, but few can economically afford that dream. This is especially true for foster youth who, for the most part, never lived in a family owned house and, now, on their own, can never earn enough money to buy a house. Recently, two boys who once lived in our group home (now young working men with families) asked me to help them purchase their own homes. They both raised enough money for a down payment and earn enough to make mortgage payments. However, they were a little short with the last minute incidentals realtors required of them. All home owners face those last minute unexpected

Obtaining the American Dream

charges. Of course, I helped them so their escrow would close on time.

What is most remarkable about this story is when these two “boys” were living at Journey House they were undocumented minors: one from Mexico and the other from El Salvador. Knowing that this would cause issues as young emancipated youth, I (along with a pro-bono immigration attorney) worked to secure their residency status and eventually their citizenship. One graduated from Pasadena High School and is now working for the County of Los Angeles, the other went to West LA College and completed a career training program for the movie industry and is now a grip for a TV program.

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Gerardo

When I was 14 years old my parents were arrested and deported for being charged as false identification dealers. While they were in incarcerated my siblings and I were put into foster care. Our family has been separated ever since.

I struggled in high school without my parents while being in foster care because I believe around that age you need your parents the most. During this time period of me rebelling during high school, my mother was released from jail and deported to her home town in Mexico. Then she fought for her kids' custody. At that time I didn't want to go back to Mexico but the government didn't let us stay so, the judge sent all my siblings including me to live with my mother. Once I was there I hated the society of Mexico, so I packed my bags and left to come to the U.S. and life with my old foster parent believing that would be a guarantee back into the foster care system. Eventually I

couldn't get back into foster care. The government really didn't help out a lot. I then realized I was on my own. Two years later I graduated high school, on stage, with my classmates and decided to become a nurse.

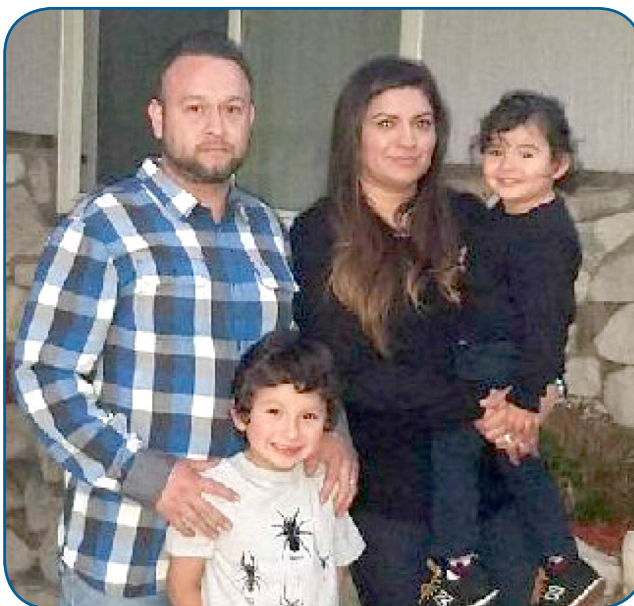
Pasadena City College was my choice because I needed to save money and I couldn't afford a university. I went through housing problems and money problems and couldn't focus on school which led me to drop out for one semester and put me far behind in school. Now I have found a good job and a good home where I'm financially stable. I'm taking classes, doing really great, and I'm ready to take on spring semester.

My goal in life is to become a nurse and work for the LAC + USC Hospital or the Children's Hospital; also have a family in the future and own my own house. I really don't have my future planned out but c'mon no one does. What I do plan though is to own a home by the beach and live there when I retire.

Director's Note: Gerardo joined Journey House in 2016. He uses the Journey House address as his mailing address and is in constant contact for guidance, mentorship, and resources that continue to help him in his education goals. He still finds time to play soccer on the weekends.

Here is one new homeowner's story in his own words.

I was born in Juarez Mexico. I was brought to California when I was 2 years old. My mom had been living in California for a couple of years. I have a big family, six brothers and one sister for a total of eight children plus my mother and stepfather. As a child we moved around a lot, from one city to another. It was a tough childhood living in numerous apartment buildings, sometimes staying in a two bedroom apartment and other times we had three bedrooms one bath. For four years we lived in a garage where we all slept in one big room which provided no privacy. When we moved to Burbank I had to sleep with all my brothers in one room. At this time, our parents didn't know how to control us, plus we were treated differently by my stepdad when his children were born. When I was in elementary school, we moved into a different apartment almost yearly, which meant I attended different schools. When I was in 8th grade, I started having trouble with gangs and taggers. I lived in a very dangerous neighborhood where I couldn't walk home without getting into a fight or being targeted by the gangs. At home I was constantly reminded by my step father that I would not amount to anything which was challenging growing up. When I was in high school I got into some trouble and ended up in the probation system due to the issues with my parents, poor school attendance, and gang activity. I soon ended up in juvenile hall. I was in Sylmar Juvenile Hall for a year before being placed at Pacific Lodge Boys Home. I was an undocumented teenager that didn't want to go home to my parents. I was there for two years before I heard of Journey House and got my interview with Tim. I remained



at Journey House from 10th to 12th grade and graduated from Pasadena High School. After graduating, I was able to move into Journey House's after-care housing Independent Living Program and started going to Pasadena City College. I was at PCC for a year-and-a-half before transferring to the Art Institute of Santa Monica. Unfortunately, I didn't last too long at Santa Monica. Juggling a full time job and going to school full-time was too difficult. I left Journey House's after-care housing and moved back with my parents. That didn't last too long. Then I moved in with my girlfriend's family. I was working full time at a towing company when I was offered a career development intern position with the Department of Children and Family Services. I was hired and I am still working full-time with the County. I was everywhere at this point. I didn't think I had a real home, I kept thinking to myself when was I going to have a home of my own. My parents lost their apartment without telling me, and since I helped them financially my credit was ruined.

I am a grown adult now and have started my own family. If it wasn't for Journey House and Tim, I would not have had the opportunities I've had. My goal is to give my children a better life and a stable home where they are loved. My wife and I saved enough money to start making my childhood dream a reality: to own a house. Last month I got the keys to my very own house. Journey House helped me again when I needed help again. My life has not been easy, but if it wasn't for all the people who supported me along the way I would not be where I am today; married with two sons, fully employed, hiking on weekends, and owning my own home.



Christmas at Journey House

Listen to our Beyond Foster Care Podcast



New episodes will be posted weekly. @BeyondFoster - Stay connected



BFC UPDATE Spring 2017

The Beyond Foster Care program got off to a strong start in 2017 making tremendous progress in building a platform for former foster youth to have a voice in the State of California. We are excited to be creating a statewide movement that recognizes the unique challenges foster youth face in transitioning out of foster care.

In 2016, we developed the Speakers Panel as a way to raise awareness and offer personal insight on the issues that former foster youth face as they age out of foster care. So far in 2017, our youth advocates hosted a panel for over 150 social work students at UCLA and sociology students at CSU Long Beach and East LA College. Advocates also attended the 2017 Alumni Powerhouse Networking Conference in Oakland.

Another update: our "Beyond Foster Care: The Need for Services Beyond the Age of 21" study with UCLA has been approved. We will begin surveying former foster youth across the state of California in the following weeks. Leading this project is former foster youth Lucero, a Masters in Social Work candidate at USC with a background in research.

In an effort to bring the foster youth voice to the decision-making process regarding California social services for former foster youth, BFC is sponsoring legislation this year. We are currently working on a bill that seeks to assist youth attending public colleges and universities. Often, foster youth have trouble navigating the college application process and consequently, too often, drop out because of the complexity of the process in addition to

the life circumstances they face. Our goal is to eliminate those barriers by streamlining enrollment for access to special services offered on college campuses so that foster youth can focus on their studies rather than attempting to navigate the college process alone. Details on our bill will come soon.

We also launched the Beyond Foster Care Podcast in February which is taking our advocacy platform online. Our podcast is one of our new communication outlets where we will share our program updates, events, and news on what is happening in the field of foster youth advocacy.



Journey House Endowment

Our endowment, managed by the Pasadena Community Foundation, is in its second year and is growing every so nicely. The purpose of the Endowment is to provide a permanent source of financial support for our future college and vocational students. The need to support young emancipated foster youth will be never end. To contribute to this worthy endowment, please send check to Journey House with "Endowment" written on the subject line.

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What's Been Happening since January

- 11 new former foster youth joined our program
- 50 program participants receive monthly assistance
- 16 students are planned to graduate this May
 - 4 receiving their AA degree from community colleges
 - 9 receiving their BA degree from universities
 - 2 receiving their Master's degree
 - 1 receiving her law degree from University of San Francisco
- Our pregnancy population has increased significantly this year
- 2 youth are homeless at this time - sleeping in their car, employed part-time and coming to JH for a shower, food, laundry and relaxation time.

Our Beyond Foster Care program has produced:

1. In partnership with the UCLA's Luskin School of Public Affairs, a statewide research project will explore the need for services beyond the age 21.
2. Assembly Bill 1567 authored by Assemblymember Chris Holden. This bill will help unify financial aid resources for foster youth attending college.
3. A sense of community with our participants through social events and speaking engagements.

All 180+ Journey House youth receive supportive services when they need it. Our services include: finding and securing safe and adequate housing, finding and securing adequate paying jobs, school guidance and enrollment assistance, and counseling and mentorship. So far this year JH staff have logged over 750 service hours.

Your support goes directly toward helping these young people better their lives and face a brighter future.



Mission Statement

Journey House supports former foster and probation youth to live fully independent, successful lives. Founded in 1983, Journey House provides emotional support and guidance, as well as financial aid to help them with the cost of attending college and vocational schools.