THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF PAY IT FORWARD
ALEX MOLINA’S STORY

Oprah recently shared on OWN’s SuperSoul Sunday, “I first met Alex Molina on the Oprah show in 2004. Alex was 20 years old, living in Los Angeles, and struggling to heal the wounds of a difficult upbringing. After years of living in foster homes and shelters, Alex became legally emancipated at the age of 16. Fighting to stay off the streets, Alex discovered Covenant House California. Through the Cov, Alex says she found support, structure, and a new way of living.” Alex added, “When I was homeless, my escape was always school. For me, from a very young age, I knew that education was going to take me out of my homelessness.” Oprah then shared, “Inspired by her courage and resilience, we surprised Alex on the Oprah show with a full college scholarship. Thirteen years have passed, since that moment, and Alex has found the connection she longed for by helping others heal.” Alex said, “I got a degree and with that I wanted to help people. That’s my purpose in life. I got hired at Covenant House as a Case Manager which was a full circle moment for me! I often have a lot of youth say that I don’t know what it’s like. I would look them in the eye and say, ‘I slept in those bunk beds. I made it to college. I made something of myself and now I’m here giving back. So yeah, I do know!’”

It broke Alex’s heart that our youth were sleeping on the same bunk beds that she slept on in 2004. So, Alex asked Oprah for help. Oprah immediately reached out to Celebrity Designer, Jeremiah Brent and asked him to oversee this important project. A tidal wave of generosity quickly followed. In just four weeks, four buildings, 40 rooms and 96 beds were remodeled to create a beautiful place for our youth to call home. READ MORE // page two

Our Mission...
Covenant House is dedicated to serving all God’s children with absolute respect and unconditional love ... to help suffering homeless youth ... and to protect and safeguard all children in need.
ALEX MOLINA’S STORY
//CONTINUED

When Oprah ended her visit at Covenant House, she addressed our youth with this final thought, “As a person who has come from a challenging upbringing, I know that your challenges, your suffering, your difficulties, every single one of them was not wasted. This will be the place that lifted you up and gave you the wings to fly out and do unimaginable things, because it does not matter from where you come, what matters is where you are going. So enjoy this with love. Thank you!”

See pictures and learn even more about this project at: www.covenanthousecalifornia.org/homeclub

A ‘SWEET’ FULL CIRCLE OF GIVING & RECEIVING
When Luke arrived at the Cov, he quickly got a job as a dishwasher with a local restaurant called sweetgreen. While working hard and moving up at work, Luke was able to transition to his own apartment, from the Cov.

Coincidentally, Samantha Bruck, sweetgreen’s Manager of Field People Support, came to CHC for a tour. We mentioned Luke, and she said he was one of the hardest workers they had and she did not know that he was formerly homeless. Because of Luke’s story and stellar work ethic, sweetgreen decided they wanted to do something to support CHC. Three weeks later, sweetgreen arrived with 40 employees and remodeled all five of our off-site apartments! Now, Luke can’t stop thanking everyone for allowing him to be a small part of what will bless the youth that will live in these apartments for years to come!

Elijah, 21

Elijah had been in foster care his entire life. Once emancipated, he worked while trying to finish high school but couldn’t find a stable place to call “home”. Eventually, Elijah found himself on the street, going days without food. That’s when he visited our Wellness Center, in Oakland, where he was given clothes, a clean towel, and a chance to take a warm shower. “Best feeling I had all year was that shower. It had been so long since I finally felt safe enough anywhere to take a real shower,” Elijah said.

Elijah transitioned into our Safe Haven Shelter Program and completed his GED. “I had a job and a warm bed and I thought things were as good as they could ever be,” he said. Then added, “But the staff here kept asking me what I wanted to do next. They kept pushing me to dream.” Elijah wants to be a social worker. “I want to change the world,” he said, “and everyone at The Cov said ‘Then do it’, so that’s what I’m going to do.” Elijah is attending college and hosting workshops for underprivileged youth. He shared, “When you feel loved, it gives you the power to show that same love to others.”

RAFAEL’S ROCK

“Seeing the smiles on our youth’s faces when I take them on an outing to the beach, or when they perform a song, maybe for their first time, and forget in that moment what they’ve been through,” Rafael Robledo, CHC’s Activities Coordinator, shared, “It’s the very best part of my job.” For youth, these activities teach healthy methods of expressing feelings—something that is commonly lost on the streets.

The most interesting office on campus—filled with flags, figurines, and art supplies—belongs to Rafael. Always within his eyeshot, though, on his desk, is a rock. The rock serves as a reminder of why he continues to champion homeless youth. “A few years ago, I took a group on an outing to Malibu. Just as we were getting ready to leave, a youth told me that he had never been to the beach in his life,” says Rafael. The youth shared, “Rafael, I am giving you this rock with holes in it to remember me by, and to thank you for bringing me to the beach. This rock is like my heart—full of holes.”

Years later, that youth returned to visit Rafael and asked if he remembered that day. And with a big smile, Rafael pointed to the rock on his desk.
DOUBLE OUR IMPACT TO DOUBLE THEIR DREAMS

In the next five years, we will double the number of youth we serve through four major projects:

- Creating a permanent site specifically dedicated to serve homeless youth in Berkeley, CA
- Renovating our Oakland campus to double bed capacity and create a state-of-the-art homeless youth services center
- Purchasing an apartment complex in LA that will provide a community of support for youth in their own homes
- Renovating our Hollywood site to increase capacity by 20%

BECAUSE OF CHC, YOUTH EXITING OUR TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAMS:

92% are living independently
83% have full-time employment

JOIN US TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN CA!
www.covenanthousecalifornia.org/homeclub

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Amanda Sattler at asattler@covca.org
or 323-217-1717
SAVE THE DATE

A NIGHT FOR YEAH!
MARCH 8, 2018

The David Brower Center
Berkeley, California

www.covenanthousecalifornia.org/
nightforYEAH

A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

As I reflect on 2017, this past year has been a whirlwind! CHC has seen unprecedented growth; nearly doubling our budget, staffing, and the youth we house each night, over the past three years. We have been blessed beyond measure to be able to do this so quickly! And yet, the need remains great; with over 10,000 youth in CA, with no safe place to sleep each night. That is nearly 1/3 of all homeless youth in the US. These are young people who are experiencing homelessness as the result of what others have done to them, not by choice. So, as a community, we have to do more.

In fact, we are committed to doubling the number of youth we serve per year, over the next five years. We have programs with a proven track record; with over 92% of the youth who participate in our transitional housing programs ending up permanently independent. So, we just need to develop more safe spaces, that can help more youth become independent! And that is exactly what we are hoping to do through our four capital projects in LA, Oakland and Berkeley provide more safe housing and services so that young people have a chance to be independent and successful. We believe that we can play an important role in keeping youth in California safe, stably housed and successful. This year, please consider helping us to Double our Impact, to Double their Dreams!

Bill Bedrossian
Chief Executive Officer
Covenant House California