As a young girl, Shantel was sent by her mother from Jamaica to live with family members in the United States, in an effort to provide her with a better life. Sadly, she suffered years of abuse and neglect at the hands of those family members, who were entrusted to care for her. By the time she was 16, Shantel knew she had to move out on her own to stay safe. Throughout it all, she never stopped having faith that God had a good plan for her future, and knew she wanted to stay in school and graduate on time.

After years of not having a safe, permanent home, Shantel found the Cov, and quickly moved through our Safe Haven Shelter program and into our Supportive Apartment Program (SAP), while building strong relationships with staff and other residents alike. She worked full-time as a security officer, while also holding other part-time jobs and attending college classes.

Today, Shantel is married, pursuing her nursing degree, working at LA County Hospital, and is the newest member of the CHC Board of Directors! She never misses an opportunity to talk about her experiences at the Cov and recently shared, “Covenant House was there for me when I needed stability, to be seen and loved unconditionally. It's an honor for me to give back by serving on the Board of Directors. I hope I can be a blessing and look forward to giving back to this place that I love so much … my Covenant House family.”

We are thrilled to have such an exceptional representation of our mission join CHC’s leadership. We know Shantel's experiences, personal successes, and desire to give back, will provide a valued and needed voice in the board room, as we continue to strive to make the best decisions we can to better serve more young people.
How a Dream Became A Reality At ‘Nika’s Place’

Nika St. Claire, a leader in advocacy for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) and Foster Youth, and longtime Director of the DreamCatcher Youth Shelter, had a dream of opening the first shelter, specifically for trafficked young women in the East Bay. Sadly, in 2012, she died in a car accident with her daughter Savannah. One year later, renovation began on DreamCatcher’s site, which included plans for ‘Nika’s Place’—a shelter specifically designed for girls, under the age of 18, escaping commercial sexual exploitation.

Today, Nika’s vision and legacy lives on! After years of construction, and another year of the licensing process, Covenant House California is proud to announce that ‘Nika’s Place’ is officially licensed and will soon be ready for girls to move in! After five years of guiding DreamCatcher through some difficult times, Director Amba Johnson could not be more excited about finally opening the doors! Under her guidance, DreamCatcher will now be able to serve more than twice as many young people as it ever has before, in its beautifully renovated, fully-licensed facility!

Ami Rowland, COO of Covenant House CA, who led the licensing efforts, shares, “The best part of this experience has been how everyone is so motivated to get the program running. DreamCatcher has had the beds ready, rooms decorated, and welcome baskets just waiting for girls who need a safe place to heal. Seeing that everyday makes me work harder to get girls into beds as soon as possible.”

In a heart-warming twist, Nika St. Claire actually ran the youth shelter for Covenant House in Oakland, before coming to DreamCatcher. Now, years later, Covenant House CA could not be more excited to help Nika’s dream become a reality, through ‘Nika’s Place’ at DreamCatcher!
BUILDING OUR FUTURE
A Capital Campaign Update

With a goal of $10 million dollars, our ‘Double Our Impact to Double Their Dreams’ Capital Campaign has almost reached the halfway mark!

As we build and renovate, we are excited to share our progress and challenges along the way. Here are a few updates of the parts of the projects that are underway:

MEDICAL CLINIC
The Medical Clinic at our Oakland site is within 30 days of being complete! It is designed to showcase the look and feel that the entire Oakland campus remodel will have. Supporters will be able to visualize how amazing the new space in Oakland will be as we seek to double the number of youth we house on campus. An abundance of windows and views to outdoor garden spaces allow our youth to be served in a tranquil environment, as we provide on-site medical care to our residents and youth experiencing homelessness in the community.

CRENSHAW PROJECT
Renovations are also underway on our own apartment building in LA which will provide an opportunity for 30 additional youth to have long-term housing off-campus. Designed to have the right balance of independence and on-site staff support, it will also be CHC’s first time to be able to house parenting youth and their children.

SOLES FOR THEIR SOULS
“I’ve gained more from giving out one pair of shoes than I ever did from owning hundreds.” Rikki Mendias, ‘Hav A Sole’ Founder.

With its mission to bring dignity, love, and BIG SMILES to those in need, Rikki and the ‘Hav A Sole’ team have donated over 1,000 pairs of brand new athletic shoes to our youth in Hollywood and Oakland. As one of the most popular on-campus events we host each year, the joy, excitement, and gratitude are palpable, each time a young person picks out their brand new high-end shoes...many for the first time in their lives! We look forward to honoring ‘Hav A Sole’s’ dedication to providing, not only shoes, but a sense of dignity and community to our youth, at our upcoming ‘An Evening For Dreams’ event in January.
A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

Like many of you, the Holidays are my favorite time of year! The joy of giving gifts, the opportunity to connect with family and friends, and hopefulness and celebration of a New Year, are so fun and exciting. But for most of the youth we serve, the Holidays are the most difficult time of year... a reminder of what they never had, of broken promises, and the challenge of trying to figure out how to survive for another year. Being at Covenant House around the Holidays has given me a whole new appreciation for the family, resources and privileges that I have in my life.

And the good news is that the young people that you support through our mission will be exposed to a whole new experience this Holiday season! One where they are surrounded by peers that care about them, staff who love and support them, gifts from strangers, and the hopefulness of knowing that they are in a safe place for this coming New Year. Some of my best memories at CHC these past several years have been spending Christmas morning with my own family at the Cov in LA. Not only does it give me a deep gratitude for my own blessings, but seeing young people have a positive experience around the Holidays for the first time is truly priceless!

As you spend time with your loved ones this year, please keep our youth close to your hearts and minds. Know that your support is truly life-changing, as this year, hundreds of young people are experiencing the joy of the Holidays and the hopefulness of a New Year, for the first time. Thank you!

Bill Bedrossian
President and CEO
Covenant House California

My son with one of our youth at Christmas. Pure joy and LOVE!