Inspirational Leaders to Today’s Youth

Some time ago, Daniela and Joseph were living a different life. They were young people who were experiencing a time of homelessness. They were youth who came to Covenant House California for a new beginning and a life they knew held so much more.

Daniela, a Covenant House California alum, and Joseph, a DreamCatcher alum, are now working as full-time Case Managers for the Cov. Here, is where they found a space where they could inspire youth, once just like them, to be more, while excelling in a career path that they continue to be passionate about.

We took some time to ask Daniela and Joseph a few questions about their unique experiences from being a youth we serve to a leader who serves others.

What did the program mean to you?

D: So many great things happened when I showed up at Covenant House California. The program meant more to me than just a place to sleep. It was a chance to find myself again. Months into the program, I often reflected on my life with a bigger picture in mind. I was excited to be in an encouraging place, surrounded by my Cov family, who wanted me to find who I was and where I was going. I have a better sense of myself and purpose in life, still to this day.

COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP: MAKING OUR STREETS A HAPPIER PLACE

Earlier this year, the Cov was inspired to beautify the streets around our buildings that we call home. Youth, staff, volunteers, and board members came out to help pick up trash, show support of the community, and meet our neighbors.

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LEADERS TO OUR YOUTH

J: The DreamCatcher program was a real turning point in my life. It affirmed within me the importance of pursing healthy relationships and higher goals; and challenged my internal beliefs that I held that were of no value to myself or others/society. It also was one of the first times I had caring relationships with adults for just being me, and allowed me to see how healthy boundaries worked. It fostered comfort and fun; while maintaining structure and purpose.

Who was your favorite staff person and why?

D: In the few years I was a resident at the Cov, Ms. Lon was probably my favorite. She shaped me into being a better person. She showed me what unconditional love meant. When I struggled with my past, Ms. Lon was always there to give me the confidence I needed to wake up and show up. She wasn’t going to leave me when things got tough. And that in and of itself meant more to me than she probably knows. The entire staff is the same way. They are there when you need them, always with a smile, showing you that you truly belong.

J: I would say it was a tie between Angie and Dewayne. Dewayne maintained the positive and welcoming space for me when I felt ashamed of things not working out at home and having nowhere else to go. The impact of this on my life cannot be overstated. Angie helped empower me to imagine a world beyond my current circumstance, without making me feel guilty if I chose my own path. Lastly, their authenticity and consistency transcended all else.

COVENANT HOUSE CALIFORNIA

Our plan over the next three years to help even more youth in California.

ANAHEIM

In Spring 2020, we are hopeful to secure our first building in Orange County.

Our goal is to start with 30 Safe Haven beds and re-evaluate the greatest needs in the coming years.

CRENSHAW

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. This is a pilot program that we hope to replicate in the Bay Area and beyond in the future!

LOS ANGELES

Renovations will begin January 2020 at our Hollywood campus to increase the number of Safe Haven beds by twenty percent.

In addition, our kitchen will begin renovations to accommodate 20% more youth so that all our young people can eat together as a family, instead of in shifts.
BERKELEY

Our goal is to purchase an apartment building to renovate for our YEAH! youth. By moving into our own building, youth will have a secure place to sleep each night and not be forced to leave each morning. Lastly, it will stabilize our ability to provide more consistent services to support our youth in Berkeley.

OAKLAND

The Medical Clinic at our Oakland site is open and treating youth in our Wellness Center. 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. We will be starting our kitchen renovation so we can feed double the young people in January 2020!

Why did you choose to give back and work here?

D: When I was finally on my own, there was never a question I wouldn’t be back. They were and still are my family. I would attend their annual BBQs and Thanksgivings as a volunteer but I knew I wanted to do more. I had eventually graduated college and when a position for a Case Manager came up, some of the staff reached out to me to apply for the job. They want you to succeed! I knew that as a full-time employee, I too could give back all that love and support they showed me. It’s an amazing thing when your life comes full circle!

J: I believe in the principle of “paying it forward” or returning kindness by extending it to the next person. The values modeled for me while in the program by the staff and seeing how it positively affected my peers in the shelter, as well, became a roadmap or moral compass. I was able to navigate college with more clarity in life and what is of value to me and what is not. Frankly, the organizational values and principles I have known Covenant House to hold, sail far beyond that of many other programs in the state. I feel honored and humbled to support DreamCatcher and Covenant House in any way possible.

We are so very grateful for Daniela and Joseph for sharing their individual paths to becoming leaders within our organization.

COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP
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We invite you to join us at our next Community Clean-up!

HOLLYWOOD
1325 N. WESTERN AVENUE, LOS ANGELES
1/24/20 at 3:00pm

OAKLAND
200 HARRISON STREET, OAKLAND
1/3/20 and 2/7/20

LEARN MORE:
covenanthousecalifornia.org/community
A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

In our last newsletter, and throughout the last year, we have celebrated 30 years of Covenant House being in California. It has been such a humbling experience to see how many people have worked so hard, and been so generous, to impact the close to 200,000 young people in that time. We are now looking at the next 30 years, and dreaming about what is possible for our youth and communities in the future. As you see in this newsletter, we have big plans! With plans to open a second site in LA (The Crenshaw Project), a new site in Anaheim, a new building in Berkeley, and expansion of our existing LA and Oakland sites, we are committed to doing more than ever to help meet the needs of homeless youth. As I reflect back on the last 30 years, and look forward to the years to come, two things jump out at me: 1) I am frequently asked if the youth are different now than 30 years ago. And the truth is, the issues our youth are facing are very different. With close to 50% of the youth we serve coming from the Child Welfare system, 40% of youth experiencing homelessness as the result of rejection and abuse over their identity, and about 20% coping with being victims of human trafficking, the issues they face are more complex and serious than ever. These high rates of abuse and trauma have led to higher rates of mental health issues, with as many as 60% of the youth needing some sort of treatment. There is also a major gap in a young person’s ability to afford a place to live in CA; even when they have full-time work, at the Living Wage rate. All of these factors lead me to; 2) Our community of support is more important now than ever before! We can only do more, and our young people can only thrive, when we have a community of support that believes in us. Through our alumni, staff, volunteers, donors, corporations invested in our mission, and many other stakeholders, we create a community of compassion, with a voice that can overcome naysayers and enlighten those who don’t understand how important our youth are to our community’s future success. So, as we embark on our next 30 years, working harder than ever, to support youth in need, I am more grateful than ever for the support and love you provide for our youth!

Bill Bedrossian
President and CEO
Covenant House California

Covenant House is a 501(c)3 organization. Monetary donations are tax deductible as allowable by law. FEDERAL TAX ID: 13-3391210

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