



"I am eternally indebted to the genuine care of the staff and administration alike, who, during some of the most tumultuous times of my life, uplifted me to no end."

-Nicholas Olivares

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Since entering the system at the age of 16, I alternated between numerous group homes, including Optimist's main campus and Pacific Lodge. As a resident in both, I pursued my education seriously, both as a way of coping with my family struggles and empowering my future.

Pacific Lodge's emphasis on mental health shadowed the punitive probationary status I carried throughout my residence. I felt energized to participate in program offerings because the staff approached youth with compassion and an eye toward social-emotional rehabilitation. For example, I enjoyed weekly meditation sessions and gained incredible support and confidence through regular meetings with Elizabeth from the mentoring program. She still checks in with me to this day! Pacific Lodge also really helped me by offering the opportunity to attend regular Narcotics Anonymous Meetings and provided services from an on-campus substance abuse counselor. This is yet another example of the high quality mental health treatment I received.

In addition, staff members like Jerome made possible countless hours of piano practice for my 2016 piano performance at Walt Disney Concert Hall, an event I will

forever hold close to my heart. My involvement with Pacific Lodge has also been highlighted by my performance at the Autumn Luncheon Fundraiser where I gained valuable connections and listened to stories of trial and triumph from fellow residents.

I am proud to share that I graduated from University of California, Berkeley in August 2019 with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Policy & Management! Currently, I'm interning at a housing program serving former foster youth while preparing to attend law school in 2021. These accomplishments could not have been possible without the dedicated support of Pacific Lodge staff who facilitated my education at Pierce College and approved a range of accommodations.

I want to thank Optimist for continuing to serve vulnerable youth, inspiring transformation in not only their present but — perhaps most importantly — their futures. I am eternally indebted to the genuine care of the staff and administration alike, who, during some of the most tumultuous times of my life, uplifted me to no end.

- Nicholas Olivares

Alumni, please keep in touch!

If you are a graduate of OYHFS or Pacific Lodge, please keep us updated with your latest contact information.

Not only do we feature alumni in publications such as this, you may also qualify for additional resources and be able to participate in the annual alumni reunions we host.

Contact us at info@oyhfs.org
818-466-6065

Please visit us at www.OYHFS.org