All-Stars Foster Youth Program: Preparing Our Students for Today and the Future

Jenna Mendez, TK-12 District Foster Youth Counselor, CNUSD
Anita Shirley, Coordinator of Counseling Department, CNUSD
Kimberly Thomas, Student Resource Specialist, Norco College
A QUICK INTRODUCTION

- Jenna Mendez | TK-12 District Foster Youth Counselor
- Anita Shirley | Coordinator of Counseling Department
- Kimberly Thomas | Student Resource Specialist
“People Don’t Care How Much You Know Until They Know How Much You Care”

JOHN C. MAXWELL
WHY?

*U.S. – 437,465 (up 40,000 from 2012)
*California - 62,000  Riverside
*County - 4,700- 6,200

People who had been in foster care as children had higher rates of PTSD (25%) than US war veterans (12%)

"The AFCARS Report," 2016; "Number of Children in Foster Care," 2017
WHY?

By age 24

67% of women have children  60% of men have been convicted of a crime
24% are homeless
52% are unemployed
3% have a college degree
8% have an Associate’s or Bachelors’ degree and only 4% have Bachelor’s

“Foster Kids Face Tough Times,” 2010; National Foster Youth Institute, 2015
ALL STAR FOSTER PROGRAM

GRADUATION RATES

% OF GRADUATES
0 20 40 60 80 100

2016 2017 2018 2019

10 OF 14 71% 100% 100% 100%
In partnership with caregivers and the community, the All-Star Foster Youth Program empowers youth with resources needed to self-advocate, make healthy choices, and prepare for their future. This is accomplished by building a strong community of support and connection in order to maximize each student’s social and emotional health and academic potential.
Foster youth are often the *invisible* underserved population.

The purpose of the All-Star program is to empower youth with the resources needed to self-advocate, make healthy choices, and prepare for their future.

Our program is designed to build a village for these "at-promise" students.
ALL STAR FOSTER PROGRAM

ALL STAR FOCUSES

CORONA-NORCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
OUR ALL STAR CLUB

All foster youth are informed of this club and encouraged to be active participants.

We hold monthly meetings and check in with each student quarterly.

Incentives Program

FOSTER SUPPORT
The club is designed to provide a safe space of students from similar backgrounds to socialize.

RESOURCES+ GUEST SPEAKERS
We discuss resources for the students to access now and after they age out. We bring in guest speakers who were former foster youth or currently help foster youth.

FUN + FOOD
We inform them of upcoming events and always provide food at all meetings.
OUR ALL STAR CLASS

We created a class for foster youth only with between 10-20 students.

Teacher should be trauma-informed and have a counseling partner.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL

Class starts with "family time" where the focus is on social training, emotional regulation, coping/life skills, + future planning. They also mentor the local elementary and middle school All-Star students.

ACADEMIC

The second hour of class focuses on academic support through tutoring, grade checks, credit recovery, and meeting with case carriers.

CELEBRATIONS

We celebrate events and all victories! Birthdays, mentor events, achievements, etc.
OUR ALL STAR MENTORS

We created our Mustang Mentor program for foster youth to be paired with an adult staff member on campus.

The program is voluntary for our students and staff.

MENTOR SUPPORT

Our program is designed for our students to have an adult on campus they trust to go to. We encourage bi-monthly check-ins.

TRAUMA-INFORMED

Staff are trained on how to best interact with the needs of these students and learn the basics of trauma-informed care.

FUN EVENTS

We have quarterly mentor events. Mentors are encouraged to attend events with their mentee.
OUR ALL STAR EVENTS

We have events 2-3 times a month for our foster students.

For the last 2 years, ERHS hosted the kick-off event in the form of a UNITY Forum.

New this year is the parent/guardian open house.

DISTRICT EVENTS

Events with all foster youth in the district. Guest speakers, DJs, photo booth, and lunch.

FIELD TRIPS + CAMP

Field trips include to the fire station, colleges, Zoo, Disneyland, and UCR high ropes course. UNITY camp in Big Bear allows students a fun experience to be around other All-Stars and to learn about themselves/others.

OTHER EVENTS

Lunch for the middle schools, mentoring, senior mentor/mentee dinner, gifts at the holidays, conferences, etc.
PROVIDING ACADEMIC SUPPORT

In addition to social-emotional support, we supplement our academic counselors in providing academic support for our foster students.

COLLEGE/CAREER CLASS

COLLEGE VISITS
Field trips to CSUSB, CSUSM, Cal Poly Pomona, CSUF, and Norco College

COLLEGE APPS
Providing assistance for all college applications, and Norco College in particular

FAFSA ASSISTANCE

ACADEMIC CHECK-IN
AB216
ALL STARS AT OTHER LEVELS

Elementary and Middle

Corona-Norco currently has 228 middle and elementary All Stars. The high school students mentor the middle and elementary students. They have specific events for those grades levels.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

GOODY BAGS/DUFFEL BAGS
Norco College packed duffel bags for each elementary student with school supplies, teddy bear, blanket, and coloring materials.

BIRTHDAY BOX

MIDDLE SCHOOL TRANSITION LUNCHEON
Current All-Stars present the program to the 8th graders with lunch and raffle.

MENTORS

ACADEMIC CHECK-IN

DISTRICT HOLIDAY EVENTS

FIELD TRIPS
ALL STAR FOSTER PROGRAM

ELEMENTARY

CORONA - NORCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
SOURCES OF FUNDING

DISTRICT
LCAP and LEA

SCHOOL SITE COUNCIL

DONATIONS
From staff, the community, Miguel’s Jr., Foundation Foundation, SilverLakes, community food bank, PTA, Circle City Rotary, Norco College leverages grant funding to support positions and the CNUSD collaboration, etc.
Donations include monetary, food, school supplies, camp supplies, etc.

FUNDRAISERS
ALL STAR FOSTER PROGRAM

Senior Dinner - Class of '17

Senior Dinner - Class of '18

Senior Dinner - Class of '19

CORONA-NORCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
ALL STAR FOSTER PROGRAM

Monthly Activities

Speakers
Team building and bonding on the challenge course
STARTING SMALL

- Identify your at promise population - homeless, low SES, foster, behavior
- Collect data (check grades, attendance, behavior)
- Support from administration and buy-in from staff
- Meet monthly - lunch, snacks
- Birthday notecards
- Mentor program/pen pals with local schools
- Welcome package
- Reach out to on campus programs (ASB, PTA)
- Explore community resources
OUR DATA SPEAKS

Our past 5 years of support has shown:

• Decreased chronic absenteeism
• Increased academic performance
• Decrease of behavior incidents
• Successful graduation rates
Resource Specialist focus:

High school
• Monthly visits
• Guided Pathways Connection
• College Bound Days
• California College Guidance Initiative (CCGI)/Career Exploration
• FAFSA
• CHAFEE
• Scholarships
• Dependency documentation
• Options for Transitional Housing

College & Technical Schools
• Application assistance
• Registration assistance
• Handoff to Student Success Coach
• Connection to additional services
• Continued support
Peer to Peer Outreach

- Current college students (former foster youth) participate in activities on High School Campus
- Mentors (former foster youth or similar life circumstances) provide support once they are Norco students
- Many are former Corona Norco students who enjoy the opportunity to return to their former campuses and share their success & challenges
- Student Success Coach & Resource Specialist participate in activities with the All Star students to include: Unity Camp, Career Days, District Celebrations, Parent Orientations and other events as appropriate.
- Provide transition services to other campuses in our District (Riverside Community College & Moreno Valley College)
Continued support...

- Resources allocation planning
- Academic Planning (reasonable units)
- Encourage persistence
- Connections through engaging activities
- On-going Celebrations

2018/19 CNUSD- Out of 28 seniors

- 17 students attended a community college (13 are at Norco College)
- 3 attended CSU/UC
- 2 attended Private Universities
- 6 are Lifeskills students
Success Stories

Roshon Williams-

• Became the president of our All-Star club
• Was asked to speak at the Riverside County School Board Association’s conference and introduce Steve Pemberton- Author, speaker and executive
• In RSP courses in high school
• Was accepted to Cal State Fullerton through the EOPS program and is doing very well.
CONTACTS

JENNA MENDEZ | JMENDEZ@CNUSD.K12.CA.US

ANITA SHIRLEY | AMSHIRLEY@CNUSD.K12.CA.US

KIMBERLY THOMAS | KIMBERLY.THOMAS@NORCOCOLLEGE.EDU