

Winter 2018

NEW HEIGHTS

Stories about life-changing journeys made possible by you!

Junior Blind
has a new name!



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Take a look inside the inaugural issue of the Wayfinder Family Services newsletter:

We are pleased to announce that as of January 2018, **Junior Blind is now Wayfinder Family Services!** Since 1953, wonderful friends like you have made it possible for us to respond to changing needs in our community. Your support has helped us expand our services to reach more people than ever before, from those who have vision loss or profound special needs to foster youth with serious medical conditions or trauma and *their families*.

Last year, we embarked on a journey to find a new name that better reflects our role in serving children, adults and families with varied challenges. We considered our history, listened to our constituents and assessed the needs of our community. As we celebrate our 65th anniversary, we are proud to become Wayfinder Family Services.

In Wayfinder Family Services, we found a name that signifies our important work in partnering with those we serve—both visually impaired and sighted—find *their way* to reaching new heights. Our new symbol shows three figures holding hands, representing how we're in this together with those we serve and loyal friends like you!

Thank you for embarking on the next 65 years with us. Together, we are the Wayfinders! ●



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Q&A with Miki Jordan

Wayfinder Family Services President & CEO

Miki Jordan joined Wayfinder Family Services in 2006. Below, she answers questions about the organization's new name, what "Wayfinder" means to her and the organization's unchanging commitment to children and families.

How did the name change from Junior Blind to Wayfinder Family Services evolve?

The name Junior Blind speaks to one segment of the community that we support today. We wanted a name that embraces all of the people we assist. We're so proud of Junior Blind's long history of serving children, youth and adults who are visually impaired and those with developmental disabilities. In recent years, we have expanded to help children and families facing different challenges. For example, we assist medically fragile children who are in the foster care system, as well as children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect.

The new name welcomes everyone who seeks assistance from the organization. This is an exciting time in our history, as we extend our hands to help more children and families overcome great challenges.

What does the name mean to you?

To me, Wayfinder means partner. From the small challenges to the biggest achievements, we walk hand-in-hand with children, adults and families along their journey. Wayfinder is a name that evokes loyalty, determination and collaboration. We want to do whatever we can to help each member of the Wayfinder family get where they need and want to go.

Do you still serve blind children?

Yes! We are as deeply committed as ever to the blindness community. In fact, we serve more children with vision loss across California than any other organization. We are one of the few organizations that has the expertise to work with children with vision impairment and multiple disabilities. We are so proud that our services reach visually impaired people of all ages, from early intervention for infants and toddlers, through recreation programs for children, to workforce development for teens and young adults who are entering the workforce. These programs and more will continue to meet the needs of children and adults who are blind, today and into the future. ●

To read the full interview with Miki Jordan and learn more about Wayfinder Family Services, please visit www.WayfinderFamily.org/MikiQandA



MISSION

Wayfinder Family Services ensures that children, youth and adults facing challenges always have a place to turn.

PURPOSE

We strive for a world in which every child and family can overcome the obstacles they face—a world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

VALUES

We put people first.

There's extraordinary potential in the people we work with, and we do everything in our power to facilitate their success.

We listen to all voices.

We invite everyone—our families, our volunteers, and our staff—to speak openly, and we believe that there's value in every viewpoint.

We get where we need to go.

No challenge is too great. With careful, thoughtful planning, we follow through on even our loftiest goals.

We strive to do even better.

We see every day as an opportunity to go further than we did yesterday, and we give children and families what they need to propel themselves forward, too.

We never give up.

Our support is unwavering. We will always be there for our children and families.



From the Archives

The Year: Unknown

The People:

Vera Brown, Los Angeles skin care luminary and devoted volunteer, with young, visually impaired girls in our program

The Moment:

Vera spent countless hours pampering the young women in our programs



A Family Affair



ANGELA BROWN

Angela Brown has faithfully volunteered at Wayfinder Family Services for more than 50 years. “When I was 10 years old, I went to the circus with my mother as a volunteer and we escorted children from what was then the Foundation for the Junior Blind,” remembers Angela. “We all had so much fun together.” Her mission was to be the “eyes” for children.

Angela’s family has a long history of supporting Wayfinder. Her mother and father, Gil and Vera Brown, began their ardent support in the 1950s and included Angela. Also, Angela has supported the organization financially her entire adult life. To continue her family’s legacy, Angela has included Wayfinder Family Services in her estate plans.

Angela’s mother, Vera, a trailblazer in the beauty industry in Los Angeles, spent countless hours pampering the young women in Junior Blind programs (see From the Archives above). Her father was on the board of directors.

“Everybody who has worked at Junior Blind or volunteered there has been a Wayfinder all along.”

As Angela volunteers and continues many of the traditions that Vera started, including pampering the mothers of our students and volunteering in our after-school program for children, she listens to the powerful stories of our families. “So many mothers have told me how Wayfinder has gone to bat for their family,” says Angela.

Her thoughts on the new name? “Everybody who has worked at Junior Blind or volunteered there has been a Wayfinder all along.” ●



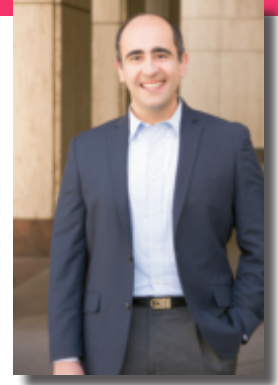
Angela’s father, Gil, a real estate developer, with his wife, Vera, promoting the Foundation for the Junior Blind, now Wayfinder Family Services, at one of Gil’s properties



Angela and her father, Gil, at Lake Sherwood

STANDING With One Hand to Give

Meet Board Member **Amir Atashi Rang**



Amir Atashi Rang experienced hardship and turmoil as a child. As an adult, he lives his father’s mantra, “Stand with one hand to give and the other to receive.” Amir spent his early childhood in Iran at a time of great unrest and violence, fleeing with his family as a young boy in 1984 on the heels of the Islamic Revolution. With the help of a relief organization, the Atashi Rang family escaped to France before immigrating to the United States. His grandfather was not as lucky. He was executed in Iran.

“We can make the world a better place through giving to those in need.”

Amir’s humble beginnings inspired him to give back and drew him in 2006 to join the board of Blind

Babies Foundation, a program of Wayfinder Family Services that serves children throughout the Bay Area and Central Valley. Today, he is a member of the board of Wayfinder. “It means a lot to me to be a part of an organization that helps people,” says Amir, “to

give opportunities to kids who otherwise would really be in a tough place.”

Amir’s story makes you believe in the American dream. After helping his father in a variety of small business ventures throughout his childhood, Amir graduated with honors from Santa Clara University and received his law degree from UC Hastings College of Law and his LL.M. degree in taxation from Golden Gate University. He is the principal of the Atashi Rang Law Firm, P.C., in San Francisco, where he lives with his rescued Labrador-Husky mix, Blake.

Amir’s sensitivity to vision impairment was heightened by watching his uncle’s struggles with vision loss in one eye. Amir’s commitment to philanthropy was shaped by his father’s mantra. “I didn’t really understand what that meant until later in life,” Amir says. “It is important to give back when your heart tells you

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A LOOK BACK AT 2017



More than 1 million hours of critical services provided



31% increase in number of children, youth and families served.



94% of our students with a single disability met their individual goals.



94% service satisfaction rate for all programs.



Merged with Concept 7 and expanded into foster family and adoption services.



86 cents of every dollar raised was spent on direct services.

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to give.” And give back he has. He has a passion for raising awareness and funds for Wayfinder’s life-changing programs.

Amir recently launched a fundraising campaign for Wayfinder, asking his friends, family and colleagues to join him in raising \$250,000. “We can make the world a better place through giving to those in need,” says Amir. You can stand with Amir and give to his Wayfinder campaign at WayfinderFamily.org/changelives. ●



Help them thrive!

Interested in giving to Wayfinder Family Services? Contact Randy Sprabary at (323) 295-4555 EXT. 220 or RSprabary@WayfinderFamily.org.

DID YOU KNOW? Science says giving is addictive

“When researchers from the National Institutes of Health looked at the functional MRIs of subjects who gave to various charities, they found that giving stimulates the mesolimbic pathway, which is the reward center in the brain — releasing endorphins and creating what is known as the ‘helper’s high.’ And like other highs, this one is addictive, too.”

— Scott Bea, Health Essentials News, Cleveland Clinic

Who We Served

92%
Low income

Latino 45%
African-American 26%
Caucasian 17%
Asian 3%
Other 9%

Ages:
0-5 43%
6-12 22%
13-17 21%
18+ 14%

Repeating Excellence



Wayfinder was reaccredited by the Council on Accreditation in November 2017! We obtained our original accreditation in 2014. Reviewers return every three years to scrutinize policies, practices and procedures and conduct interviews with clients, staff and board members. They were so impressed with the “depth of excellence” they found during their recent review that our reaccreditation was expedited!

Of our team, they said, “Staff understand not only the whole child, but also the whole family and the needs of the family, exceeding the expectations and limitations to make the impossible, possible.” Wayfinder is one of only nine nonprofits in Los Angeles and 149 in California to achieve this status. Accreditation means that Wayfinder Family Services has exemplary fiscal, operations and program management.



SOLVING the Foster Care Crisis One Child at a Time

DID YOU KNOW?

1 in 2 children in foster care have chronic medical problems unrelated to behavioral concerns.

Sadly, chronic conditions increase the likelihood of serious emotional problems.

Neglect is the #1 reason children are placed in foster care.

More than 14,000 children each year are at risk of leaving foster care without a family to call their own.

The facts are staggering.

- As of July 1, 2017, **more than 60,000** children in California were in foster care.
- **More than 100 times a day**, a California child is placed in foster care.*
- On any day, Los Angeles County is home to **more than 21,000 children in foster care**, or 35% of the state total.*

These children have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect and have faced some of the most traumatizing events a child could endure. Children in the child welfare system need caring foster homes, and thousands of them need loving families to adopt them.

Like you, we could not turn our back on children facing the greatest challenges. Now, Wayfinder Family Services is part of the solution! Wayfinder has added the foster family and adoption programs of Concept 7. Through this merger, Wayfinder provides:

- **Placement** for children in foster homes with trained, carefully matched foster families that have room in their hearts and homes
- **Assistance throughout the adoption process** for parents who are giving a child in foster care a loving, permanent home
- **Comprehensive support** services for foster children and their caretaker families
- **Counseling and case management** for foster children reuniting with their natural families to ease the transition home

Wayfinder decided to expand our services because we could see the need in our own Children's Residential Program. Children from the child welfare system entered our program with medical and mental health issues. They worked hard to stabilize and improve. But after six months to a year, many still had no foster family with whom they could be placed. They often lost hope.

Every child deserves the chance to be loved.

Now, Wayfinder can help these and other children find foster or permanent homes. With our medical expertise, we can train prospective parents to care for children who have medical conditions or behavioral issues. We can find families to love and nurture children who have been removed from their biological families.

Our new focus area builds on our founding belief that every child—regardless of circumstance—deserves the chance to thrive and to be loved. We welcome the children and families of Concept 7 as members of the Wayfinder family! ●





Meet a **WAYFINDER FAMILY**

How Evelyn Met Her **Daughter**

“I see her every morning, running to me, saying ‘Mommy, mommy, good morning, I love you.’ That doesn’t have a price.” —Evelyn

Josie was exposed to drugs in the womb and was placed in the care of a foster family at birth. At age 1, Josie joined Wayfinder Family Services’ Infant and Early Childhood Program. She couldn’t walk. She was unable to track objects with her eyes. She struggled with fine motor skills, like putting objects into small holes.

“As soon as she saw me, Josie started yelling like she knew me.”

Evelyn was Josie’s first Wayfinder specialist. “As soon as she saw me, Josie started yelling like she knew me,” remembers Evelyn. Nothing like this had ever happened to Evelyn in her work with special-needs children. **“It was like she chose me in that moment,”** says Evelyn.

Evelyn used her professional skills to improve Josie’s fine motor skills and vision. Their bond grew. “I was always thinking about Josie,” says Evelyn. “I kept dreaming about her.” After four months, Josie’s foster mother asked if Evelyn wanted to adopt the little girl? Yes! **At 21 months old, Josie became Evelyn’s daughter.**

Josie continued to receive services from a colleague of Evelyn’s at Wayfinder Family Services. Josie began walking, and then to Evelyn’s amazement, running! When Josie was tested at age two-and-a-half, her developmental scores were so high, she would not need special education classes.

“I’m always going to be so grateful to Wayfinder that I had the opportunity to meet my baby,” says Evelyn. Today, to practice Josie’s motor skills, they run and jump and walk on the sidewalk lines. They play with Legos to bolster Josie’s fine motor skills. Josie will start dance lessons next year. She wants to learn to play the piano. “Whatever she wants to try, I’m going to be next to her to support her,” says Evelyn. Josie’s adoption will be finalized in March 2018. But they are already a family. ●

DID YOU KNOW?

85% of all early learning is visual.

Children learn to walk, eat, play and do much more by mimicking others around them, which puts babies with visual impairments at a great disadvantage and higher risk for developmental delays.

Every \$1 spent on early intervention saves \$17 in future care and support.



Evelyn, a Wayfinder specialist, worked with Josie to improve her vision. The happy ending: she adopted the little girl.

SAVE the DATES!



Saturday, March 17, Central Valley
Saturday, March 24, Bay Area

An egg-ceptionally good time!

Please join Wayfinder’s Blind Babies Foundation at the annual Beeper Egg Hunt, an event where children who are blind or visually impaired take part in a traditional egg hunt adapted just for them. Special eggs that emit beeps are hidden throughout the park. Children find the eggs by following their sound.

For more information or to sponsor a beeping egg, please contact Karen Koh Thompson at (510) 446-2229, ext. 751, or KThompson@WayfinderFamily.org



Saturday, April 28,
Los Angeles Campus

The Junior Blind Olympics is now the **Wayfinder Paralympic Games**

This special sporting event offers children who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled the rare opportunity to compete in Paralympic sporting events against their peers. Confidence and joy fills the air, as hundreds of children with visual impairments row, run, climb and jump their way to new heights. You don’t want to miss this event!

For more information or to sponsor an athlete, please contact Debbie McBeth at (323) 295-4555, ext. 267, or DMcBeth@WayfinderFamily.org.



Sophia and Kwame Morris present the Stevie Wonder Star Student award to Lillyannah Russo at Wayfinder’s annual Children’s Holiday Carnival.

A WONDERFUL Family!

The legendary Stevie Wonder loves to celebrate the holiday season with the children and families of Wayfinder Family Services. His children, Sophia and Kwame Morris, carried the Wonder family tradition in 2017, presenting Wayfinder student Lillyannah Russo with the Stevie Wonder Star Student Award at our annual Children’s Holiday Carnival. Thank you to the Wonder Family for your love and support! ●

#WayfinderMoments
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Give with trust.



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