

Q&A with Miki Jordan

Wayfinder Family Services President & CEO

President and CEO Miki Jordan joined Wayfinder Family Services in 2006. Miki is only the third president since the organization's founding in 1953. The daughter of Fred and Willie Jordan of Fred Jordan Missions, Miki was born to lead. She is known for her visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to the most vulnerable children, adults and families. Under her leadership, the organization has grown from a budget of \$10.5 million to \$48.9 million, helping more than 20,000 people per year reach their greatest potential.



Miki's numerous awards include Outstanding Professional from the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Non-Profit CEO of the Year from the Los Angeles Business Journal, Best of LA Women's Business Award in philanthropy, and the Community Leadership Achiever Award from the Association of Multi-Cultural Concerns, an affiliate of the California Council of the Blind. In 2016, she received the Excellence in Leadership Award from VisionServe Alliance.

Below, Miki 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.

What is most important for supporters to know about the new name?

We may have a new name, but we are still the same great organization that we have been since 1953! We are serving more children and families than ever before and are one of the most respected organizations in California. We have come a long way. We are so grateful to our supporters for helping us positively impact so many lives.

Do you still serve children who are blind?

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. These programs and more will continue to meet the needs of children and adults who are blind, today and into the future.



What is your vision for the children and families you serve?

We believe every child deserves a chance to live life to the fullest. We meet each person where they are and partner with them to help them reach their greatest potential, their personal best.

Why has the organization expanded? Are you still the same organization?

We are still the same organization with the same responsiveness to people who need our help. Almost from the beginning, the organization has been growing. Norm Kaplan, the founder of Junior Blind, realized that, in addition to blind children, children with special needs needed our help. He opened our special education school in 1962. In 1970, the organization began serving adults and kept on growing. As the needs in our community have changed, the organization has expanded to meet them. We have gained expertise and expanded to assist more people facing different types of challenges.

What are the greatest needs at Wayfinder Family Services?

Several of our programs are funded completely by private dollars, like Camp Bloomfield. In cases where we receive public dollars, the cost of providing Wayfinder's high-quality services far exceeds the funding that we receive from public sources. Each year, we must raise money from individuals, foundations and corporations to fund our programs and bridge the gap between the true cost of providing our exemplary programs and the funding we receive. Every dollar helps us change a life.

You have led the organization since 2006. Describe your best day at work.

The Wayfinder staff will do anything to help a client. I love watching our teams work together, doing whatever it takes, to help a child in our program.

What brings you joy in the work you do?

We are helping children and families face some very tough challenges. It's that spirit of community and the power of a village working together to help a child that brings me joy at Wayfinder.

Why is this area of need important to you?

When I first visited our Los Angeles campus, I knew I wanted to be a part of Wayfinder's important work. These children and adults need a voice and an advocate, and that is my guiding light every day.

Donors have so many choices of charitable organizations they can support. Why give to Wayfinder?

When you give to Wayfinder, donors are supporting an excellent organization that changes lives in profound ways—more than 18,500 lives a year. Donors can give to Wayfinder with confidence for three reasons:

1. We change lives every day. We provide critically needed services to children, youth, adults and families that very few organizations have the expertise to serve.
2. We have a long history in the community. We were founded in 1953 and have become one of the nation's most respected organizations.
3. Donors can give with trust. Wayfinder Family Services is fully accredited by the Council on Accreditation, and we receive the highest ratings from Charity Navigator and the Better Business Bureau. These achievements mean we have exemplary financial, operations and program management. Very few nonprofit organizations have received these distinctions.

We are so grateful to the individuals, foundations and corporations that donate to Wayfinder. And we appreciate our strong partnerships with public agencies that fund us.

To read the full interview with Miki Jordan, please visit www.WayfinderFamily.org/MikiQandA

**Junior Blind
has a new name!**



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