



County of San Diego

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December 5, 2017

Foreman Jeff Bryson
San Diego Grand Jury
330 W. Broadway, 477
San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Mr. Bryson,

In response to the 2016-2017 Grand Jury Report "FOSTER CARE CIVIC SUCCESS OPERATING AT 50% OCCUPANCY...WHY?", recommendation 17-19 had not yet been implemented.

The 2016-2017 Grand Jury Recommendation 17-19 to the Health and Human Services Agency and the Health and Human Services Agency's complete response is below:

17-19: Consider highlighting the San Pasqual Academy student achievement with quarterly progress reports as one of the means used by Child Welfare Services to increase enrollment as San Pasqual Academy in the plan noted above.

Response: This recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

This recommendation has been implemented in Fiscal Year 2017-2018, with the first quarterly progress report, *San Pasqual Academy News*, shared in October 2017. A copy of this report is attached.

Please let us know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Helen N. Robbins-Meyer
Chief Administrative Officer



SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY NEWS

Academics

Seventeen students graduated from San Pasqual Academy on June 15, 2017.

- ◆ Five enrolled at Sacramento State University.
- ◆ One enrolled at San Francisco State University.
- ◆ 11 students elected to attend two-year community colleges locally and in northern California.
- ◆ One student entered the world of work.

Seven Academy students participated in UCSD's Academic Connections from 07/09/17-07/29/17. This three week program provides high school students an introduction to college life - living on campus in residence halls, taking college classes, participating in campus activities, and learning about the support services available at the university.



Ten Academy students participated in the Promises2Kids' San Francisco College Trip from 07/31/17-08/03/17. Students had a chance to visit four year universities as well as tour the Google facility.

The Academy on-site high school began classes on 08/14/17. Students are enrolled in core subjects as well as electives, including Career Technical Education in the culinary arts, multi-media, and business entrepreneurship. The 2nd grading period ends November 8th.

The Academy's Dragon Organics Farm is part of the hands-on classroom and internship program students participate via the entrepreneurial course. The farm recently received its annual organic certification. Current harvests include butternut squash, honeynut squash, pumpkins, cilantro and carrots!

New Alternatives

Residential Program

New Alternatives completed the accreditation process for the Academy.

The Academy received the Angels in Adoption Award from the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI). This award recognizes both individuals and organizations who make extraordinary contributions to adoption, permanency and child welfare. The Academy was recognized as providing an alternative permanency resource for youth in the foster care system as well as on-going support to those who graduate from the Academy.



Community Engagement

Academy students walked, jogged and ran in the *Live Well San Diego* 5K held on July 30th.

Academy students participated in the 2017 Del Mar Junior Lifeguard Program from 08/07/17-08/11/17. An opportunity for students to improve their water safety skills as well as enhance their fitness and self confidence.

Students participated in the Promises2Kids' Back to School Shopping event on 08/13/17. Promises2Kids generously provided transportation for the students to and from SPA.

In partnership with the Helen Woodward Animal Center and Promises2Kids, students are participating in an on campus Pet Therapy Program twice a month.

Five students were selected to travel to Hawaii as part of the Urban Surf 4 Kids 2017 Dreaming of Aloha trip. Activities include exposure to the Hawaiian culture, water sports and volunteer work.

The Academy's Recreation Therapy Program has partnered with Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) North County to provide weekly boxing for nine students and The Comedy Palace to offer an Improv Comedy Club twice a month for 10 students.

The Academy received a certificate of recognition on 09/11/17 for a short film submission to the "Directing Change" contest. The program raises awareness on issues such as reducing the stigma of mental illness and suicide prevention. An Academy alumnus was instrumental in inspiring the production and creating the content of the short film.

Updates

Athletics

The Lady Dragon Girls Volleyball

October 19- The Lady Dragons beat Julian in 3 sets. Record: 3 -2.

October 24- Warner Springs vs. Dragons at home.

Winter sports begin November 1

Girls Basketball Coach - Tia Moore

Boys Basketball Coach - Marcus Robinson

Counseling Corner

October 11-students took the PSAT.

October 20-Field Trip to SDSU. Students learned about admissions and housing requirements, as well as student life from SPA alumni Simone Hidds-Narcisse.

October 31-Field Trip to UCSD.

Work Readiness Youth Employment Services (YES) Program

27 students were off campus and 35 students were on campus in either internships or employer paid positions from July to September 2017.

- ◆ Off campus employment sites include Taylor Trim and Supply, Chipotle, Safari Park, Starbucks Coffee, Panera Bread, and Escondido Hospice.
- ◆ On-campus internships include Dragon Organics, the recreation program, Cyber Café, the maintenance department, and the Dragon's Lounge.

The YES Program assisted alumni over the summer with **resume writing, employment searches and job placement assistance.**

Students toured **Blue Apple Ranch**, a rescue for abused, neglected and abandoned horses on 09/22/17. Afterwards, students submitted internship applications and are waiting to hear from the Ranch.

Starbucks Coffee provided a training workshop at the Academy during the summer, and invited Academy students to their Rancho Bernardo store to participate in employment interviews.

Girls Inc. of San Diego County hosted an on-campus coding workshop for ten female students in July.

Nine students completed the six week **Pre-Employment Traineeship (PET Program)** over the summer. PET is an introduction to the world of work and provides students up to \$10 a day for demonstrating five key behaviors (professional attire, punctuality, honesty, productivity and having a positive attitude).

QUARTERLY DRAGON SPOTLIGHT

Deja, a 2015 SPA graduate, is quickly approaching 21 and nearing the end of her participation in the Extended Foster Care Program. Deja is currently a full-time student at Sacramento City College and will attend San Francisco State University in the upcoming academic year on a **scholarship for Track and Field as well as Cross Country**. While Deja runs down the road of success, things haven't always been easy.

Deja vividly remembers the struggles she experienced educationally, socially, and financially in her first year after leaving the Academy. Deja began her first year of college at Sierra College and struggled to maintain passing grades and "staying out of drama," resulting in her being asked to leave the dorm. Once off campus, she struggled to find affordable housing, reliable transportation, and a positive and supportive network of friends. Deja moved from apartment to apartment, month after month. She failed nearly all of her classes that first year and contemplated returning to San Diego as she "ran out of options."



After much soul searching and discussion, Deja shares that the **"only thing I do well is run fast."** After deciding that she wasn't going to give up she reached out the Track and Field coach at Sacramento City College and inquired about a school transfer and was accepted to. She immediately found a network of supportive friends on the track team and her track coach became a mentor.

At Sacramento City College, Deja has an extremely demanding school schedule as she had to make up the failing grades from her first year of college. She also participates in daily track practice and track meets throughout the month. While Deja has struggled month after month to make ends meet, but is beginning to effectively manage her money. She learned to budget money and, despite the occasional setbacks, she does not let this discourage her. Deja continues to reach out for help from her social worker, New Alternatives, and the Friends of San Pasqual Academy for emotional, educational and financial support. She shares that she has received encouragement from the SPA community and admits that the **life lessons she has learned have been difficult to manage, but rewarding nonetheless.**

At present, Deja is a full-time student, a member of both the Track and Field and Cross Country teams, works part-time at a local group home for foster youth, and feels prepared for the next phase of her life. Deja's "advice" for graduating seniors and students at SPA is to "stay in the dorms as long as you can." She also admits that **"asking for help is hard,"** but the guidance of adults has allowed her to make **"fewer and fewer mistakes over time."** She is incredibly grateful for the financial support she has received noting that she "would have been homeless if it weren't for New Alternatives" and the Extended Foster Care Program. Deja is looking forward to completing her education at San Francisco State University and aspires to become a social worker. She would like to follow in the footsteps of her former and current social workers, Lisa Gilbert and Rebecca Zelnik-Rabe, and to "help other foster kids." She adds, **"It's my time to pay it forward."**

Written by Protective Services Worker, Rebecca Zelnik-Rabe