

County Foster Youth Celebrate Accomplishments at Second Annual

Graduation Event

More than 70 Current and Former Foster Youth are honored for Achieving Educational Milestone

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF. –More than 70 Santa Clara County current and former foster youth were honored this week for graduating from High School, obtaining a GED, earning a Vocational Program Certificate, Associate Degree, Bachelor and/or Master’s Degree in the 2018-2019 academic year.

"We are thrilled to celebrate the amazing educational achievements of our foster youth," said County of Santa Clara Supervisor Cindy Chavez, Chair of the Board of Supervisors’ Children, Seniors and Families committee. "It truly takes a village of individuals, families and communities to work together to ensure our foster youth’s emotional and educational needs are met."

Local foster youth were treated to a special night at Levi’s stadium that included an awards ceremony and dinner. The celebration was hosted by the County’s Department of Family and Children’s Services, (DFCS), Child Advocates of Silicon Valley (CASA), the Bill Wilson Center (BWC), Pivotal, and the San Francisco 49ers.

"Our graduating foster youth deserve to be celebrated and recognized for having the strength and determination to reach this important educational milestone." said Department of Family and Children’s Services Director, Francesca LeRúe. "We’re working to create a strong network of support for our foster youth and are grateful to our partners who help to ensure Santa Clara County is a place for our foster youth to grow, thrive and succeed."

The Department of Family and Children’s Services (DFCS) partnered with the community and professionals working with local foster youth to celebrate the educational successes of young people in foster care.

"Empowering and encouraging youth through education is a core value of the 49ers," said Director of Community Relations Stacy McCorkle. "We’re thrilled to help honor the tremendous achievements of these foster youth."

"It’s an honor to celebrate all the incredible young adults from foster care who are working hard to create the life they want for themselves. Everyone’s path is unique and it’s a privilege to be a part of their journey," said Pivotal CEO, Elise Cutini. "Our youth deserve to have people in their lives who believe in them, help them set the bar high and achieve their dreams. We are eager to continue working with these students to help connect them to all the tools they will need to define and achieve their education and career goals and ultimately find happiness."

"We applaud all of the foster youth who have overcome the trauma, grief and loss of being removed from their families and emerging as high school, trade school and college graduates," said Bill Wilson Center CEO Sparky Harlan. "Bill Wilson Center is proud of our youth’s accomplishments and will always welcome them as part of the BWC family."

Current foster youth graduating from high school, and continuing to higher education, were eligible to apply for a DFCS Scholarship. Four \$1,000 DFCS Scholarships were awarded at the event. The 2nd Annual Foster Youth Graduation celebration was held at Levi's stadium last night.

FACTS ABOUT FOSTER YOUTH:

Foster youth face unique challenges that don't always impact non-foster youth. When it comes to achieving a high school education, the numbers are troubling, about 30% of foster youth in the United States never graduate high school. For those without stable homes, it can be a struggle to make it to class and stay focused on their studies. Despite these obstacles to educational attainment, foster youth express a desire to achieve higher levels of education.

- As of April 2019, there are 1095 foster youth in Santa Clara County.
- In June 2019, 53 foster youth will graduate from high school in Santa Clara County.
- In June 2019, 25 foster youth will graduate from higher education in Santa Clara County (AA and BA)
- In 2019, 176 foster youth participated in the County Intern & Earn program.
- In SCC, from 2014 – 2018, more than 80% of our foster youth completed their high school requirements.
- Nationally, only 71% of foster youth receive a high school diploma by the age 19.

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ABOUT THE COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA, CALIFORNIA

The County of Santa Clara government serves a diverse, multi-cultural population of 1.9 million residents in Santa Clara County, the fifth largest county in California. With a \$7 billion budget, more than 70 agencies/departments and 22,000 employees, the County of Santa Clara plans for the needs of a dynamic community, offers quality services, and promotes a healthy, safe and prosperous community for all. The County provides essential services including public health and environmental protection, medical services through Santa Clara Valley Medical Center (SCVMC) hospitals and clinics, child and adult protection services, homelessness prevention and solutions, roads, parks, libraries, emergency response to disasters, protection of minority communities and those under threat, access to a fair criminal justice system, and scores of other services, particularly for those members of our community in the greatest need.

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