



DECEMBER 2020

Orangewood NEWS



FINDING A HOME

Home is a place where you feel the most comfortable. It is a place you call your own. For Jo, it was hard to find “home.”

Jo was living with her foster family and participating in Orangewood workshops that taught life and employment skills. But she knew she needed a place to live after her time was up at the foster family. She eventually moved into an Orangewood transitional housing program site where she began to learn how to live on her own.

But the transition was hard for Jo. “It was an emotional time,” she says. “I was going through a lot of ups and downs. I was ultimately struggling with myself.” After two years in the program, a change was needed. “We felt like Jo wasn’t actively working on her goals,” explains Elsa Justo, Jo’s Youth Support

Specialist (YSS). “Ultimately, we had to ask her to leave but made it clear that we would still be here for her.” Jo left and was referred to another housing program.

As Jo’s time at the other housing program was coming to an end, she reached out to Orangewood Foundation. “The door was always open,” said Jo. “I was always in contact with Orangewood staff, even after I left.” She was welcomed back with open arms. Jo moved into an Orangewood Rising Tide apartment and once again worked closely with Elsa on her goals –everything from finding a career goal to budgeting. “She was always on top of what she needed to do,” Elsa smiles.

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GREETINGS FROM OUR CEO



Chris Simonsen
C.E.O

Dear Friends,
Happy holidays to you and your family!

The comfort, security, and safety of home have never meant more to all of us than it does now as a result of COVID-19. One of Orangewood's four core areas of support is housing. We're proud to provide the resources

and guidance to help youth like Jo (see page one) navigate Orange County housing and move from transitional housing to a place of their own.

This holiday season, the pandemic has increased the isolation, uncertainty, and anxiety of many Orangewood youth. But as the cover of our 2019/2020 Annual Report* proclaims – we are with them together through anything. Francisco, a staff member in our onsite Orangewood Resource Center, recently shared, “When the youth ask, ‘What are we going to do?’ I say, ‘I don’t know but we’ll learn together!’”

We have been so grateful for the outpouring of support for Orangewood's youth since the pandemic began impacting all of our lives in mid-March. Unfortunately, the impact of this health crisis has stayed with us longer than

we hoped. Our youth's needs are still extensive so please consider adding Orangewood and our youth to your own holiday gift list, whether through the donation of an item off the wish list included in this newsletter or through a year-end cash gift.

Looking for other ways to help? Despite the pandemic, we have completed construction of our dorm at Samueli Academy for students from foster care. If you are interested in being a resource for these teens by becoming a foster parent, please visit our Youth Connected Program page at www.orangewoodfoundation.org/ycp.

Stay safe and best wishes in the New Year!

*To read our annual report, please visit www.orangewoodfoundation.org/annual-report, or email us at info@orangewoodfoundation.org to request a printed copy.



FINDING A HOME (CONTINUED)

When HUD Vouchers became available to a limited number of Orangewood youth that would allow them to find their own, permanent housing, Elsa knew Jo was the perfect candidate. Provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the vouchers let youth pay 30% of their income, instead of market rate, for rent. “With United Way of Orange County, Orange County Social Services Agency, and Orangewood Foundation, youth can have the full experience of having their own place,” Orangewood Foundation Housing Coordinator Bretannia Hutchinson explains. “Social Services is in charge of the HUD Voucher selection and making sure a recipient has a support system like Orangewood Foundation to help them after moving in. United Way has a network of landlords that lowers the barriers, so youth are able to move in.”

Jo and Elsa applied for the voucher and successfully received it. Today, Jo lives in an apartment that is exactly what she wanted – one that could hold a big



couch and a porch for her to enjoy. “I was so excited when I first got my keys to my apartment,” Jo smiles brightly. She has decorated her apartment, with the help of her YSS, Elsa, and Housing Coordinator Bretannia. Every day, she looks forward to coming home from her job as a licensed phlebotomist, a job made possible through grants she received from Orangewood for classes, and being greeted by her new dog, Shadow.



THREE WAYS TO HELP THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

The **HOLIDAY SEASON** is a time of mixed emotions for our youth. The holidays can bring up difficult memories of loss, betrayal, or disappointment. COVID-19 adds an additional layer of complex emotions and feelings for our youth – isolation, uncertainty, fear, and anxiety.

1 PURCHASE A WISH LIST ITEM

Each year, Orangewood Foundation coordinates a holiday drive for youth that we serve. Below are items typically on our youth’s wish lists:

- GIFT CARDS (Target, Amazon, Uber/Lyft in increments of \$25 or \$50)
- HEADPHONES/EARBUDS
- SOCKS (all sizes)
- POTS & PANS
- HYGIENE ITEMS (body wash, shampoo, and conditioner)



“I am so grateful for Orangewood’s annual holiday gift drive. Practical items mean a lot to us youth. **They are luxury items that we can’t afford.**” – Cruz



2 MAKE A DONATION

Please take a moment now to donate to Orangewood youth by completing the enclosed envelope or by visiting our website.

Learn more information about the holidays on our website by hovering your phone’s camera over the smart code or visit www.orangewoodfoundation.org/holidays



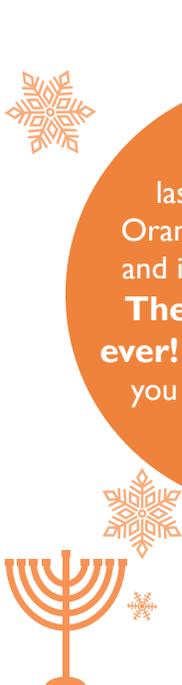
3 CONSIDER BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT

“I received gifts last Christmas from Orangewood Foundation and it made me so happy. **The best Christmas ever!** Thank you for all that you guys do for me and many others.”
- Jasmin

Foster parents are simply people who commit to build a relationship and help guide a student through their youth, or further into life. Orangewood Foundation’s Youth Connected Program (YCP) provides an innovative mix of services and support for foster youth and their caregivers



To learn more about the program and how you can become a resource parent hover your phone’s camera over the smart code or visit www.orangewoodfoundation.org/ycp.



SET A NEW HEALTH & FITNESS GOAL IN 2021!



Considering making healthier life choices in 2021?

Now is the time and Orangewood can help! Make it your New Year's resolution to participate in the **2021 ORANGEWOOD ADVENTURE CHALLENGE** on April 24th on Catalina Island.

Take part in an exciting, demanding and multi-sport team-based adventure race. The race covers a range of outdoor activities to test the boundaries of both brain and body.

LET'S KICK OFF 2021 WITH HEALTH!

If you're interested in participating or becoming a partner, email us at info@orangewoodfoundation.org.



3 WAYS TO DE-STRESS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

RELAX & UNPLUG

Take a break from your screen and make yourself a mug of hot chocolate or a favorite holiday drink. You'll be surprised how it instantly relaxes you.

EXERCISE

Burn off the turkey and mashed potatoes by taking a walk. It's the quickest way to blow off steam.

MAKE A LIST

Like old St. Nick, make a list and prioritize the things you need to accomplish during the holidays. Schedule time for yourself, work, holiday shopping and fun.

ORANGEWOOD IN THE NEWS

Check out the front page article in a recent Orange County Register on the opening of the on-campus dorm for Samueli Academy students from foster care and our innovative, new Youth Connected Program that will support them and their caregivers.



You can read the article and learn about the Youth Connected Program by hovering your phone's camera over the smart code or visit www.orangewoodfoundation.org/ycp.