



“COLLEGE GRADUATION IS NOT JUST ABOUT GETTING A DEGREE—IT SYMBOLIZES EVERYTHING I HAD TO OVERCOME. MOVING INTO RANCHO GAVE ME STABILITY AND PURPOSE DURING A CRITICAL TIME IN MY LIFE. THERE WERE MOMENTS I FELT OVERWHELMED BALANCING SCHOOL, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND FATHERHOOD, BUT I KEPT GOING BECAUSE I KNEW I WAS BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE. TODAY, GRADUATING MEANS GROWTH, STRENGTH, AND THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING EVEN GREATER.”

- JORDAN, TAY RESIDENT



CONGRATS

2026 GRADUATES!

This year, we are proud to celebrate an incredible group of graduates connected to our Rancho community. From our Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program, we honor seven high school graduates, former Rancho youth who have successfully completed our program and reached this important milestone. We are especially proud that one of these graduates is already continuing their education at Pierce College, Los Angeles.

From our Transitional Age Youth residents, we celebrate two outstanding college graduates. Nati is graduating from the University of California, Los Angeles with a degree in Sociology, with an emphasis in Economics. Jordan, featured here, graduated from California State University, Northridge with a degree in Communication Studies and Journalism, marking a major achievement shaped by perseverance and determination.

We congratulate all of our graduates on their hard work and resilience. Their accomplishments reflect the strength and spirit of our Rancho community.

BUILT FOR HEALING, DESIGNED FOR HOPE

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AUBREE SWEENEY

"The first thing you notice is the calm." It's what we hear from most people every time they step foot on our campus. Some call it "magical," others call it "spiritual," some say "ancestral," but most agree that Rancho's land is a sacred place for healing and growth. Our grounds are maintained here by a team of dedicated staff working in collaboration with various long-term vendors to care for the land and the buildings on our campus.

Recently, with the support from Los Angeles County and the State of California, Rancho was given an opportunity to upgrade our campus with elements that would enhance the youth and visitor experience. We carefully selected upgrades from both our "necessity list" and our "wish list." We worked closely with skilled contractors, Hoffman and Associates Building Corporation, and architectural design company, KMB Design Studio, to complete the projects in record time.



This included upgrading the bathrooms and living space of one of our residential units, "Brother John's House," the last of the three residential programs to get remodeled for decades, some of which was original build! We added more outdoor gathering spaces around campus, replacing "decomposed granite" with pavers, adding shade pergolas, landscape, areas to sit and gather, and even outdoor games like ping pong! We upgraded from dirt to a proper running track and added outdoor exercise equipment around our field. Also, the indoor Fitness Center was upgraded with state-of-the-art cardio and strength training equipment. The Creative Healing Arts Building expanded to include an outdoor performing arts space for youth presentations and gathering as well as a "Healing Garden" for mindfulness, meditation and groups. This space was carefully designed to be inviting, fun, calming, and to pay homage to our Native American ancestors. There is a beautiful mural featuring a phoenix, representing hope and resilience. It is said a phoenix appears in times of crisis as a sign that life can continue and improve.

"MA'AM, I FEEL LIKE I'M ON VACATION BECAUSE EVERYTHING IS SO BEAUTIFUL."

- CURRENT RESIDENT

When I recently asked a resident how he liked the new upgrades, he replied, "Ma'am, I feel like I'm on vacation because everything is so beautiful." We take pride in our grounds and so do those blessed to inhabit our space. We are beyond grateful for the support we received to make this happen in such a short window of time.

Aubree Sweeney



REMEMBERING ANDRE WILLIAMS

BY TROY MCNAIR, RESIDENTIAL DIRECTOR

Andre Williams was not only a cherished colleague, but he was also one of my closest friends and “big brother” for more than 41 years. We first met in 1984 at Oxnard High School, where we played football together. After he graduated in 1985 and earned a football scholarship to the University of Oregon, and I later went on to the University of Washington, our friendship only deepened. Summers were spent fishing, hanging out, and carpooling between our colleges, memories I still hold close.

In 1991, after we both graduated, Andre was hired at Rancho San Antonio as a group worker. He encouraged me to join him, and despite my hesitation about the long commute, I eventually followed. 34 years later, I am still making that same drive, because of him.

Throughout his career, Andre served in multiple units and worked directly with youth, touching countless lives. His final role as a Teacher’s Assistant showcased what many already knew: Andre had a rare gift. Kids from all over the world connected with him instantly. His sincerity, humor, and steady presence made him unforgettable. In addition to his incredible work and friendship, Andre was a licensed barber and proudly served as Rancho’s barber for more than 25 years. He kept countless youth looking sharp, always turning a simple haircut into a moment of connection.

Andre was also an avid fisherman, often joining staff and boys on memorable fishing trips over the years. Those days on the water were filled with laughter, storytelling, and friendly competition, memories that many still cherish. His talent didn’t end there. Andre was a master of the BBQ, teaching many of us the true art of grilling. Whether it was a staff event or a casual weekend cookout, his BBQ skills brought people together.

For years, Andre and I carpooled daily. Those two hours together, talking about sports, family, and life, were a blessing. Whenever I was frustrated or overwhelmed, he grounded me with a simple reminder: “We are blessed.” He had a way of seeing the bigger picture.

It was at Rancho that Andre met Tracye, the love of his life. Nearly 30 years of marriage and two wonderful sons, Miles and Nohl, stand as a testament to the man he was: loyal, humble, protective, and deeply devoted.

Andre’s impact extended far beyond his job duties. He influenced and mentored so many staff members throughout his career, always leading with kindness, humility, and wisdom. His absence leaves a tremendous void, and he will be deeply, genuinely missed.

I will miss my friend.



RANCHO ALL-STAR

A MESSAGE 29 YEARS IN THE MAKING



Earlier this year, Rancho San Antonio heard from David, a former resident who had once been part of Executive Director Aubree Sweeney's very first caseload as a social worker nearly 29 years ago. Reaching out to Aubree to share an update on his life, he reflected on the impact she and Rancho had during an important chapter of his journey. What began as a simple thank you became a powerful reminder of the lasting connections formed at Rancho and why this work matters.

"Things never improved for me at home, but I learned so many things and was able to disconnect from everything negative in my life and keep moving forward."

The alumnus shared that although life after Rancho was not easy, the foundation built during his time here stayed with him. He described returning home to difficult circumstances; an abusive father, a mother struggling with alcoholism, and challenges no young person should ever have to face alone.

Despite the obstacles, he persevered. Emancipated at 17, David worked two jobs after graduating high school, and eventually met the woman who became his wife. Together, they built a beautiful life. Today, he serves as a supervisor for a water district in Corona and his wife is a middle school principal. They are raising three daughters and are proud to report that they have an early college graduate who is heading to law school.

Perhaps one of the most meaningful parts of his story: "I never got arrested again, stayed positive, and shared my journey with some of my wife's kids at school who are heading down negative paths."

Nearly three decades after his time at Rancho, David reflected on the guidance and kindness Aubree showed him as his social worker. It was clear the impact she had on his journey at Rancho and beyond. In his email he

shared, "Really awesome that you are still there helping all these boys! Rare that someone stays put as long as you did... they couldn't ask for a sweeter, kinder person."

At Rancho San Antonio, we know that real change does not happen overnight. For many of our youth, healing begins with having someone believe in them when they are struggling to believe in themselves. Years later we often see the impact and healing that comes from this investment in young people. Stories like David's reflect the importance of consistent guidance and compassion in helping young people move beyond trauma, rebuild their sense of self, and empower them to risk, change, grow.SM



SHARON'S WORK

A TESTIMONY BY KELLEY BUTLER, MENTAL HEALTH DIRECTOR

When people visit Rancho's campus, many describe a sense of peace or warmth. Sharon Covington often described it as a spiritual presence that surrounded the campus, creating a place where blessings could flourish and young people could feel cared for and protected.

Sharon retired from Rancho San Antonio in April 2026, after serving the agency for 49 years, starting as a Clinical Social Worker (therapist), spending most of her career as the Clinical Director, and finishing out the past several years as the Assistant Executive Director.

Thirty-one years ago, in 1995, Sharon hired me for my first job fresh out of graduate school as a Clinical Social Worker. I spent two years at Rancho as a therapist in the residential program and developing what would turn out to be life-long friendships with my coworkers.



For the next 21 years, I worked for the Los Angeles County Department of Probation, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) and a variety of different but related jobs. I often found myself with at least a little bit of regret, wondering about my decision to leave Rancho.

In 2018, Rancho launched a new contract with LACDMH, and I found myself drawn back to Rancho. All it took was stepping back onto Rancho's beautiful campus to help me make the decision that I really felt drawn to return. I was welcomed back with open arms and open hearts.

Over the next eight years, Sharon was my direct supervisor. This time around, the road was a little rockier for me in terms of professional development, personal development, and most importantly for me, spiritual development. At times, I struggled - I remember at least a handful of times when I was called into Sharon's office and "set straight" in the kindest way possible. I always felt like I was getting in trouble. But those times were always followed by immediate grace and love displayed genuinely toward me by Sharon.

I always say, "Sharon brings the sparkle to the party!" In all the little ways, she makes every meeting more fun and every occasion even more special - whether it's a charcuterie board or dancing to Hall & Oates, Sharon knows how to have fun!

As the years have gone by and I've reflected on Sharon's retirement, I've realized that God's timing was greater than any plan we may have had. When I returned to Rancho in 2018, I believe Sharon originally planned to stay only another year or two—but God clearly had other plans. Looking back now, I'm deeply grateful she stayed longer, and even more grateful for the guidance, grace, and support she gave me along the way. Sharon, thank you for hanging in there with me.

Looking back on my ten years working at Rancho, spanning three decades, having had the privilege of working with Sharon, and as I move away from how I experienced things in the physical world to what was happening for me in the spiritual world, my work with Sharon becomes much more clear.

Sharon's legacy is a legacy of grace. In Christian teachings, a legacy of grace is embodied by living according to the Word of God, even in the face of challenges, and embodying God's love and mercy towards others.

As I now see Sharon, my work, and my purpose at Rancho and in life more clearly from a spiritual perspective, what I see in Sharon is the "fruit of the Spirit." The Fruit of the Spirit, as detailed in The Bible, in Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV), consists of nine attributes that reflect a Christ-centered life and the work of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

As Sharon steps out of Rancho and into her next adventures, she can step away confidently knowing that what she leaves behind is not just a career—it is a testimony. A testimony of faith lived out daily, of character formed over time, and of grace that will continue to inspire long after today.

I love you and I thank you, Sharon.



CAPTURING MORE THAN CARS

KEEPING THE TRADITION ALIVE

Rancho San Antonio welcomed supporters, partners, and car enthusiasts for our 79th Annual BBQ, featuring the Classic Chevys of Southern California Car Club's annual car show. Guests enjoyed classic and custom vehicles, the SoCal Open Model Car Show, Pinewood Derby races, and a menu full of BBQ favorites, pupusas, baked goods, and more.

This cherished tradition has brought our community together for nearly eight decades, and this year's event created a special opportunity for one of our youth.

A youth in our residential program who recently expressed interest in photography was invited to help capture the day's festivities. Camera in hand, they photographed classic cars, guests, and moments across campus, turning curiosity into creativity. This became an opportunity to build confidence, explore a new passion, and preserve the event through their own lens. Their photographs served as a beautiful reminder that growth and discovery can happen in unexpected places.

Thank you to everyone who volunteered, worked, donated, and attended. Your support continues to keep one of Brother John's favorite traditions alive.



HONORING RANCHO'S OWN

WOMAN OF THE YEAR, AUBREE SWEENEY



**"THESE HONOREES REPRESENT THE VERY BEST OF
#AD40, WOMEN WHO LEAD WITH PURPOSE,
UPLIFT THOSE AROUND THEM, AND HELP MAKE
OUR COMMUNITIES STRONGER EVERY DAY."**

- ASSEMBLYMEMBER PILAR SCHIAVO



Rancho San Antonio's Executive Director, Aubree Sweeney, was selected as "San Fernando Valley Woman of the Year" through a community nomination process sponsored by Assemblymember Pilar Schiavo, District 40.

Aubree was nominated by a Rancho staff member who recognized her steady leadership, decades of dedication to youth, and unwavering support of staff and families. Under her leadership, Rancho has expanded services and strengthened programs while continuing to create lasting impact in the lives of youth and the community.

As noted in the nomination, "the clearest measure of her impact is found in the young people who return years later to visit her. Former Rancho youth stay in touch, sharing milestones, careers, and families they have built."

This recognition celebrates and honors a career built on resilience, empathy, and unwavering dedication to youth and families.

Congratulations, Aubree, on this well-deserved recognition! Rancho is stronger because of your leadership and your impact continues to create pathways for future success.



BBQ GATHERING AREA



BBQ GATHERING AREA



FITNESS CENTER

Across Rancho San Antonio, several new outdoor spaces have recently been completed for youth and staff to enjoy. Improvements include a new rubberized track, outdoor fitness stations, expanded gathering and BBQ areas, landscaped hangout spaces, and a renovated fitness center with updated workout equipment.



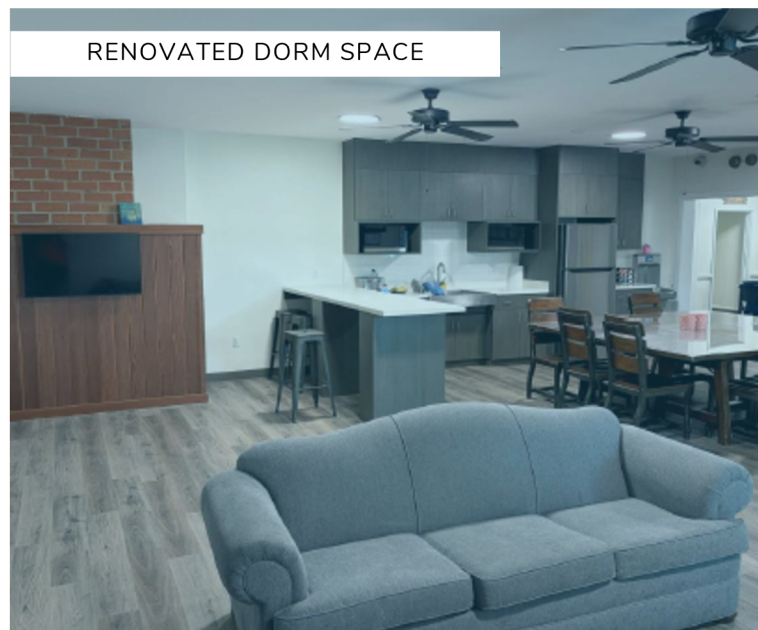
OUTDOOR FITNESS EQUIPMENT



OUTDOOR TRACK WITH LIGHTING



GATHERING AREA NEAR FIELD



RENOVATED DORM SPACE

Near the Creative Healing Arts studio, a new outdoor performing arts stage and healing garden provide additional space for creative activities, reflection, and outdoor gatherings.



OUTDOOR STAGE AREA



CREATIVE HEALING ARTS



HEALING GARDEN

THE SECOND CHANCE THAT SAVED ME

AND THE CALIFORNIA LAW THAT COULD EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES

I emerged from foster care at age 18 with virtually nothing to my name. Today, I use my experience in the system to support young people going through the same kind of trauma and institutionalization I faced.

Yet, because of minor crimes committed before they even turned 21, too many young men of color face barriers working in the kind of nonprofit youth programs that transformed my life. That's because long delays due to background check exemption approvals often mean applicants must move on to other jobs before they can get hired at these nonprofits.

This is a missed opportunity for those like me, once labeled "delinquents," to give back to the communities we came from. For every one of us turned away from supporting today's youth, California also loses a chance to transform many lives by showing young people there's hope for their future.

Second chances are what kept me from the gang life that my father and brother lived. My mom was in and out of prison, so I lived with my grandmother. After being arrested several times at age 15, I ended up in foster care, living at Rancho San Antonio, a nonprofit home for boys. I credit the second chance I received there with saving my life. Away from neighborhoods ruled by gangs and with incredible support, I was finally able to envision building a real life for myself.

But had it not been for another fortunate chance, I would likely have been forced back onto the streets. I aged out of the system just as California was launching a new transitional housing program for foster youth turning 18. With housing and support during that transition, I was able to go to college and earn my associate degree. I soon transferred and graduated with my four-year degree. After that, I returned to work at Rancho San Antonio as a peer supporter.



Santo is a former foster youth, Rancho alumnus and former staff member, as well as a licensed clinical social worker and published author.

This op-ed was written by Rancho alumnus, Santo Castro, and first appeared online at "The Imprint" on 4/20/26. In April, Santo visited Sacramento and testified in front of state lawmakers to help pass bill #AB2126, known as the PEER Act.

Current background check rules require former foster youth with nonviolent records to wait up to 14 months for an exemption review, meaning agencies lose qualified candidates who cannot wait that long for a paycheck. The PEER Act would create an automatic exemption for current and former foster youth whose offenses occurred before age 21, while serious violent and child-related felonies remain excluded.

Being a peer supporter means being a living, walking, speaking example for kids who've never seen someone like them succeed, someone they can look at and think, "Wow, you were me?" Now, I spend every day trying to create second chances for young boys growing up the way I did.

Dozens of studies demonstrate that the support of people with shared experience improves outcomes in mental health and substance use recovery. But a criminal record that follows youth into adulthood poses a significant barrier to doing this healing work.

BENEFACTORS LIST

RANCHO IS GRATEFUL TO OUR FRIENDS WHO CONTRIBUTED FROM APRIL 1, 2025 THROUGH APRIL 30, 2026.

ALL DONATIONS ARE GREATLY APPRECIATED.

OUR MISSION WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT.

INCLUDES MONTHLY SUSTAINERS AND IN-KIND DONATIONS.

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YOU CAN GIVE RANCHO YOUTH A SUMMER THEY'LL REMEMBER



For many Rancho youth positive summer memories are few and far between. With your support, young people healing from trauma can experience moments of joy, friendship, and discovery through outings beyond our campus. A baseball game, a day at the ocean, or trying something new for the first time can help a young person feel confident and part of a community while creating positive memories.

Every youth deserves a memorable summer.
Please show your support with a donation today.



MESSAGES OF HOPE

IN MEMORY OF BROTHER JOHN CROWE

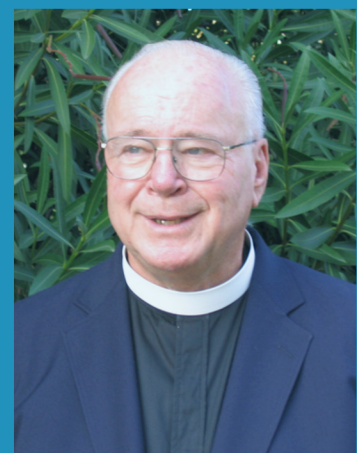
May we walk into new adventures with courage, wisdom, and peace.

May the roads before us be guided by light, even when the path feels uncertain.
Protect our hearts from fear, our minds from doubt, and our steps from harm.

May we find strength in challenges, joy in discovery, and kindness in every place we go.
Surround us with good people, safe passage, and moments that remind us we are never alone.

Bless the work of our hands, the dreams we carry, and the journey still unfolding ahead of us.
And when we grow tired, remind us to rest; when we feel lost, remind us to trust; and when we succeed, remind us to stay grateful.

May days bring growth, purpose, love, and protection wherever life leads us.



1934 – 2025

The following donations were made to Rancho as tributes

In memory of Al Ghirardelli
Marie Ghirardelli

In honor of Al Jones
Trena Spurlock

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Andrew Koman and Marvin Keogh
Mary Jo Koman

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*In honor of Aubree Sweeney,
Kelley Butler, and Sharon Covington*
Dr. Joseph Spinazzola

In honor of
Bill and Jeanene Tussy
Bill Tussy

In memory of Brian Hoover
Patricia and Gary Hoover

In memory of Brother John Crowe
Angeline Thornton
Arthur and Paula Connolly
Jonathan and Lisa Jones
Judy and William Zimmerman
Kevin and Carol McDonough

In memory of Bryan Aquino
Kassandra Ortega

In memory of Carl Fischer
Betty and Larry Debold
Loretta Allen

In memory of Carole Camerota
Caren Sawyer

In memory of Dolores Tukich
Angelo Orlando, Los Angeles
Catholic Alumni Club

In honor of Doug Mahon
Stuart Ogilvie

In memory of Douglas J. Barone
Esther Perez

In honor of Edith Sullivan
Toni Hertz

In memory of Edward H. Pence
Mary Aganaze Jones

In memory of
Emily Ruddy and Mel Spratley
Alice Spratley

In memory of
Father Bill Moore, CSC
Peter and Marie Ferry

In memory of Galen
Sue Nihiser

In memory of Gordon Jenkins
James Clifton

In honor of Jackson Budke
Terri Budke

In memory of Jason Jolly
Constance Jolly

In honor of
Jennifer D'Alvarez and Rosalie Brown
Robert Lurie

In memory of Jim Melgaso
Theresa and Charles O'Connor

In memory of Jim Sater
Vicki Sater

In memory of
John William Lydecker
Warren and Dorothy Lydecker

In memory of
Joseph and Catherine Bellinder
Michael and Marilyn Bellinder

In memory of
Joseph and Marie Saliger
Marilou Perez

In memory of Joseph Coscarelli
Ray Pullara

In memory of Joseph Tamusaitis
Helen Tamusaitis

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In honor of
Knights of Columbus Council #1174
Richard Hansen

In memory of Loni Kallay
Michael Kallay

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In memory of Maria Enterante
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In memory of Michelle Watson
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*In honor of Military
and Law Enforcement Officers*
Olivia Kelly

In honor of Millie Sciuto
Patty Sciuto

In honor of
Monsignor Robert MacNamara
Barry Wagner

In honor of Nati Jatana
Joan Spencer

In memory of
Neil and Carol Sweeney
Megan Sweeney

In memory of Nelson Baldo
Joseph and Barbara Baldo

In memory of Oakie O'Connor
Thomas and Linda O'Connor

In memory of Peter Ruth
Stephen Hoyle

In honor of Peter Tullio
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In memory of Ray Young
T.R. Narvaez

In memory of Richard Mader
Monica Mader

In memory of Robert Lefevre
Louis Lefevre

In memory of Rose Huddleston
S. Russell Edwards
Brian Edwards

In honor of Rosie Brown
Casey Lufrano

In honor of
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Jacqueline Cascione

In memory of Shirley Weinbeck
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CREATIVE HEALING ARTS FOCUS

MORE THAN AN ART SHOW

We hosted our very first Museum of Creative Healing Arts (MoCHA) Showcase, celebrating the creativity and growth of our youth. More than an art show, the event created a space where youth could feel seen as staff and guests paused to experience the stories and emotions expressed through their artwork.

The pieces on display reflected weeks of participation in groups, where youth explored self-expression, took creative risks, and allowed art to speak where words sometimes cannot.

Thank you to our staff and supporters whose presence reminded our youth that they are seen, valued, and celebrated.

