



BRIGHTSTAR
SCHOOLS

ALUMNI NEWS

ALUMNI SUPPORT & COLLEGE SUCCESS PROGRAM

BY GENOVEVA CORTES (310) 948-1733 GCORTES@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

BSSCA CLASS OF 2010-2016

ADRIANA LINARES

BSSCA 2016
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES 2020
MAJOR: CHILD AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Adriana Linares is on a mission to make a difference in the lives of children who are hospitalized with serious illnesses, are in need of surgery, or have disabilities. She is preparing to become a certified Child Life Specialist and is working on completing her 120 hours of volunteer service at a hospital. Once she graduates this Fall of 2020, she'll be working on completing 400-600 hours as an intern in a hospital with a Child Life Department and will need to take an exam before she can start her career.

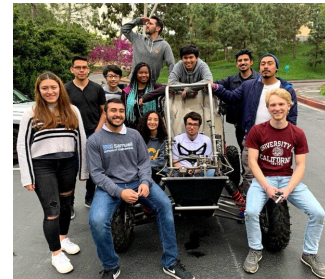
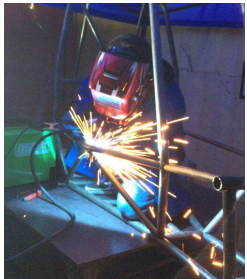
With her 3.9 GPA, self-care has been instrumental for her in managing the stresses of being a fulltime college student. She advises that you "take time for yourself" by taking a 1-unit kinesiology class every semester. In the past she has taken tennis, running, and physical conditioning. This year she's taking softball. She exercises at the CSULA gym at least twice a week. Gyms on college campuses tend to be free with your student ID. "Find something you enjoy" or are curious about. She has made strong friendships with other people in her cohort, which she recommends. "One person I met lent me all her books from a class she already took," which saved her hundreds of dollars. She has also used the library to read required books that were too expensive to purchase.

Some last advice that has helped her succeed in college: go to Office Hours to speak with your Professors about anything from class, career advice, etc. Use the Writing Center to improve your essays and homework. Get into EOP because they provide free scantrons, booklets, agendas, and workshops on time management and stress relief.



JOSEPH CASTRO

BSSCA 2016
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE 2020
MAJOR: MECHANICAL ENGINEERING



This future Mechanical Engineer advises Freshman to "(not) come in too proud. I had a 4.3 GPA at BSSCA and went to a 2.0 GPA my first year because I thought I didn't have to study. I thought I was already smart enough." And he is but you still need to study in college! However, Joseph doesn't make excuses, he finds solutions, and corrects. Through hard work and perseverance, Joseph will graduate in several months with a GPA well above a 3.0.

Joseph has been busy this year, working on average 70 hours a week, as the Chief Engineer for UCI's Baja SAE, an intercollegiate design competition run by the Society of Automotive Engineers. Teams of students from universities all over the world design and build small off-road cars. His team was tasked with not only designing and building their car but also giving sales presentations to investors to convince them that their car is well made and easy to manufacture. Sub teams were formed to design every part of the car from the suspension and chassis to the powertrain and brakes. Last year, they made the mistake of separately designing their own parts but when they tried to fit everything onto the chassis, the parts wouldn't fit. This year Joseph closely managed the subteams and ensured that communication was a priority. Each car must go through a battery of tests to ensure it performs well, is safe to drive, and is durable. In the Baja SAE, there is the Dynamic event that tests for maneuverability, torque, and durability. Last year, Renegade's steering wheel was positioned too low to the ground. After two hours of the four-hour Endurance race, Joseph had bruises from his ankles to his knees due to the steering wheel hitting his legs after driving over rocks. This year they changed the design on their new car, Vandal, and the positioning of the steering wheel. They also realized Renegade's engine was too far up which caused it to flip over numerous times. This year, they lowered the center of gravity on Vandal's engine so it wouldn't flip over. In Baja SAE "you have to fail quick and learn quick."

Mechanical engineering is complex, extremely technical, and frustrating because it involves constant experimentation. "You have to verify every component's specifications against the design requirements along with vigorous testing." In the lab, he's had to calm team members who were frustrated because they would try things that still wouldn't work after weeks of failure.

Unfortunately, this year's Baja SAE competition was canceled because of Covid-19. Being the overachiever that he is, Joseph also hasn't been able to work on tinkering with Vandal as UCI has locked him and all his teammates out of their lab by deactivating their key cards. For our incoming Freshman, he advises to "not be afraid to ask questions. Professors are just people too. If you don't get it, ask them so they can help you figure it out and explain it in different ways so that you do. I even text a few of my professors for help and advice."

BSSCA CLASS OF 2017-2019

BY GRACIELA APARICIO (818) 398-2358 GAPARICIO@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

BSSCA ALUMNI AT THE LA MARATHON

LEONARDO MORENO
BSSCA 2019
LATTC
MAJOR: UNDECIDED



BRANDON BALTAZAR
BSSCA 2019
UC MERCED 2023 (EXPECTED GRAD)
MAJOR: MECHANICAL ENGINEERING



GILBERTO DE LA TORRE
BSSCA 2018
UC MERCED 2022 (EXPECTED GRAD)
MAJOR: ENGINEERING



The 2020 LA Marathon saw many BSSCA SRLA students complete the tough 26.2 miles and some BSSCA Alumni who decided to run the marathon on their own. All these alumni trained independently, managing college classes, work and various responsibilities in their lives. Leonardo Moreno shares that this is his second time completing the LA Marathon. He joined SRLA his senior year at BSSCA and contributes his training and ability to complete the marathon to his coaches Ms. Lopez and Ms. Santillanes. Running is where Leo feels free, where he relaxes and doesn't think about his problems, and clears his mind. He hopes to be able to qualify for the Boston Marathon one day and will continue running as long as it takes to complete his goal.

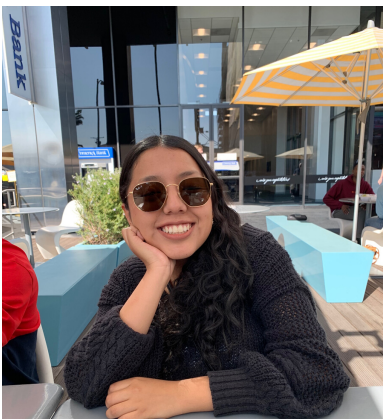
Brandon Baltazar highlights that he choose to run the marathon a second time to be able to see the SRLA team. "They are like my second family and every single runner there has helped me and encouraged me although they might not realize it. Seeing them run and watching them not give up and trying their best motivated me to try my best as well. It was fun running the marathon this year and last year and I will definitely be going for round 3. I would really like to encourage those who haven't ran a marathon to give it a try as it is an experience they won't forget."

Gilbert shares his motivation in completing his first official marathon: "Running a marathon is something that many people fear doing, including myself. After supporting my friends at the 2019 LA Marathon, I promised myself I would run the next LA Marathon no matter what, and that is precisely what I did. Weeks after the 2019 marathon, I began running. Running was never something I enjoyed doing, but it was always that one thing I wanted to master. One Sunday morning I woke up early and told myself I was going to run a marathon on my own and I did precisely that. It wasn't an official event, nor do I think it was the exact length of a marathon, but I ran the most I ever ran before. And so in February I signed up for the LA Marathon to run with two of my friends, and do something extraordinary. With little to no training, I ran the LA Marathon, pushing myself through all the cramps and soreness. I was persevering through something to test my mentality and my will to fight in a tough scenario. I am proud that I completed my first of many Marathons."

LITZY DIEGO

TRANSFER STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

BSSCA 2018
SMC - CSU/UC?: 2022 (EXPECTED GRAD)
MAJOR: COMMUNICATION STUDIES



Litzy shares her success in being able to transfer in 2 years: I decided to take 12 units my first semester at SMC. To me 12 units were pretty easy and manageable. So after realizing that, I decided to challenge myself by taking more units the next semester and also taking classes during winter and summer sessions. During those sessions I decided to take my remaining GE requirements through online classes to get those out of the way and to take more major-required classes at school. Although I technically didn't have a break from school, the online courses still allowed me to have the break I wanted and still allowed me to focus on my other priorities." Additionally, Litzy is involved in various clubs and organizations at SMC. She is happy to leave SMC but will miss it.

Litzy is majoring in Communication Studies and has been accepted to Cal State Fullerton, San Jose State University, CSUN, and is waiting to hear back from other schools.

VAHS CLASSES 2017-2019

BY KYLE PETRIE

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**CRYSTAL PINEDA - UC BERKELEY
VAHS '19: PSYCHOLOGY**

After being named Salutatorian as a senior at Valor, Crystal has continued her success as a freshman at Berkeley. She has decided to pursue psychology as her major and is considering a career in law or in data analysis. Although Crystal thought her transition to such a large university would be more difficult, she acknowledges that living independently and managing her schedule has been the challenge. Crystal has enjoyed the variety of course offerings at Berkeley and has taken classes that include Taekwondo and swimming! Crystal credits Ms. Stern's AP Government class for preparing her for the rigors of college coursework. Crystal's best piece of advice for seniors is to be more involved, both inside and outside of school, and to take more initiative in both academics and extracurricular activities.

**JOSIE GREDONIA - SAN DIEGO STATE
VAHS '18: KINESIOLOGY**

In her time at San Diego State, Josie has kept herself busy - both academically and physically. Due to her interest in sports, she has decided to pursue a major in athletic training, and may possibly continue her education by earning a master's degree when she is finished with her undergraduate education. Additionally, she has played both intramural basketball and volleyball. After eight years at Valor, Josie acknowledges that adjusting to a school with over 30,000 students can be challenging, but she's taking advantage of her opportunities. In her words, "Throw yourself out there. There will be opportunities for you...try to network through college and make connections for your future career."

BENNY CAMACHO - CAL STATE EAST BAY**VAHS '17: COMPUTER ENGINEERING EXPECTED GRAD: MAY 2021**

Benny Camacho is wrapping up his junior year at Cal State East Bay. He says that he's enjoyed his time thus far, and is fortunate that East Bay has a smaller student/teacher ratio like Valor. Although meeting people socially was more challenging at first, Benny has been able to navigate that transition. He's currently majoring in computer engineering and will be working in a career in that field after graduating next spring. Benny acknowledges that the way Valor's classes are structured has been very helpful throughout his three years in college. Specifically he sites his ability to analyze text, have thoughtful discussions, and write detailed essays as factors that have helped lead to his success in school thus far. His most important advice to current Valor students is to "watch what classes you take early on." He states, "the better a student can set themselves up as a freshman in college, the more smoothly their junior and senior years will go!"



RKHS CLASS OF 2020

STAY TUNED...

IN JUNE 2020 WE'LL HAVE RKHS'S 1ST GRADUATING CLASS

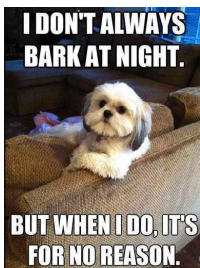


Every hand that we don't shake must become a phone call that we place. Every embrace that we avoid must become a verbal expression of warmth and concern. Every inch and every foot that we physically place between ourselves and another, must become a thought as to how we might be of help to that other, should the need arise.

RABBI YOSEF KANESKY

SCHOLLY
COVID-19
Student
Relief Fund

In certain regions of South Africa, when someone does something wrong, he is taken to the center of the village and surrounded by his tribe for two days while they speak of all the good he has done. They believe each person is good, yet sometimes we make mistakes, which is really a cry for help. They unite in this ritual to encourage the person to reconnect with his true nature. The belief is that unity and affirmation have more power to change behavior than shame and punishment. This is known as Ubuntu - humanity towards others.

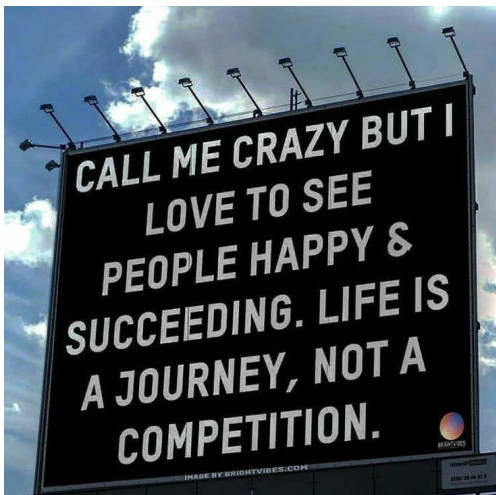


With the COVID-19 health crisis sweeping across the nation, we know how challenging these coming weeks and months will be for students and their families. In Scholly's unrelenting effort to support students in need, we are providing cash assistance to those in need during this unprecedented crisis.

Apply today to receive \$200 in cash assistance to help cover expenses during this global crisis. Our application takes less than two minutes.

At Scholly, we're proud to be known for big scholarship and student loan payoff payoffs. But in these unprecedented times, we believe it's our duty to help as many students and their families as possible. By providing \$200 in cash assistance, we aim to provide essential financial help to buy groceries, health supplies, and other necessities to those in need. If you're a student, parent of a student, or graduate, we encourage you to apply today.

Complete your application below. Applications will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and are subject to approval and available funds.



impact

You never really know the true impact you have on those around you. You never know how much someone needed that smile you gave them. You never know how much your kindness turned someone's entire life around. You never know how much someone needed that long hug or deep talk. So don't wait to be kind. Don't wait for someone else to be kind first. Don't wait for better circumstances or for someone to change. Just be kind, because you never know how much someone needs it.

Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive.

~Dalai Lama

BRIGHT STAR SCHOOLS ALUMNI SUPPORT & COLLEGE SUCCESS TEAM

All Bright Star Schools Alumni and Alumnae, high school graduates, will be supported in graduating from college for up to 6 years. Our goal is for our Alumni to earn a Bachelor's, Associate's, Career Technical Education degree, or workforce development certificate from an accredited college or program. If you are a BSS Alumni from the class of 2014-2020, we will be there to help you navigate, thrive, and succeed in graduating from higher education. If you have paused your education or want to get started in a program tailored to your goals and circumstances, please reach out to us so we can help you before your membership in the program expires.

KYLE PETRIE

BA, BOWDOIN COLLEGE

**VAHS ASCS COORDINATOR
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2017 - 2020
KPETRIE@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG**

Kyle Petrie has worked in urban public education for over 12 years. He initially entered the field as a high school history teacher in the Bronx, NY, as part of Teach For America. After his time in New York, Kyle spent seven years as an AP teacher, advisor, coach, and Director of Alumni Support at Gary Comer College Prep on Chicago's south side.



As the ASCS Coordinator at Valor Academy High School, Kyle's primary responsibilities revolve around ensuring that all Valor alumni receive adequate support with the financial, academic, and social-emotional concerns that they face while pursuing higher education. Kyle is primarily motivated by the belief that higher education is the foundation that will allow our students to be successful and happy in both their careers and personal lives.

GRACIELA APARICIO

BA, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA
MS. CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

**BSSCA ASCS COORDINATOR
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2017 - 2020
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Graciela Aparicio has been working with high school students of color since 2013. In her undergraduate career, she organized conferences for undocumented high school students in Ventura County. After graduating from UCSB in 2015, she started her career in education working in numerous high schools in the San Fernando Valley in various roles such as math tutor, college counselor, academic counselor, and academic case manager.



In 2018, she completed her Master's of Science in Counseling and P.P.S Credential at CSUN. Graciela understands the necessity of our students of color to get into higher education and meet their educational and/or career goals. She's excited to work with the Bright Star Secondary Charter School alumni and provide the support they need to navigate post-secondary education.

GENOVEVA CORTES

BA, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES
M.ED. HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

**ASCS DIRECTOR
SUPPORTING BSSCA CLASS OF 2014 - 2016
GCORTES@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG**

Genoveva Garibay Cortes has over two decades of experience working as an elementary and middle school teacher, K-12 and college administrator, and program coordinator. She was Bright Star Schools' founding math teacher for Stella Middle Charter Academy in 2003, and currently serves as the Director of the Alumni Support and College Success (ASCS) Program for the organization.



Geno developed and launched Bright Star's ASCS Program to support the organization's alumni to persist in and graduate from higher education. ASCS tracks, supports, and coaches Bright Star Schools' alumni to get to and through higher education, with a goal of 60% of Bright Star Schools alumni graduating with a bachelor's or associate's degree, vocational certificate, or from a workplace development program within six years of high school graduation.

**RKHS ASCS COORDINATOR
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2020
@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG**

Will be announced in May 2020 newsletter.....