



# ALUMNI NEWS

BY MIKE CARRERA

MCARRERA@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

## BSSCA CLASS OF 2017-2021

### DONNAVON EALY

**BSSCA ALUMNUS 2021**  
**LOS ANGELES TRADE TECHNICAL COLLEGE:**  
**EXPECTED GRAD: SPRING 2023**  
**DEGREE- PLUMBING: CONSTRUCTION TECH AA**



#### What did you enjoy most about your time at LATTC?

I like the fact that most of my classes are hands-on. The teachers are also very supportive. They're available before and after class for additional help. Overall, I enjoy LATTC because it offers the trade that I'm interested in and I don't have to spend 4 years in college to earn my certification.

#### Why did you choose plumbing?

There's always a high demand for plumbers. It's also a great paying profession and my goal is to one day have my own plumbing company. I can start small but maybe in ten or twenty years, I will have multiple plumbers working for me. My grandfather's friend is a Master Plumber and he's been guiding me through the process.

#### What is something you are looking forward to this year?

I really want to travel and see different places. I also want to make money and learn about the stock market and investing.

#### What keeps you motivated during the pandemic?

Myself. I want to succeed, I'm not doing it for someone else or to make someone proud. I want to accomplish my goals and that's what keeps me motivated.

#### What advice would you give for people that say school is not for me?

Don't be quick to say NO. You should at least give it a try. You don't necessarily have to go to a 4-year college but you should at least learn a craft. There are a lot of certification programs that LATTC offers. School in college looks way different than high school. I'm done by 11:30 AM and I only have classes Monday through Thursday.

#### What is some advice you would share with students in high school?

Don't spend too much time out of school. Try to find something you're passionate about and start your career. I also encourage everyone to learn one trade because you'll always have a job but most importantly you'll know how to do something.



# VAHS CLASS OF 2017-2021

BY KYLE PETRIE

KPETRIE@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG

## MONICA HERNANDEZ- RAMIREZ

VAHS ALUMNA 2018  
CSU, NORTHRIDGE: EXPECTED GRAD MAY 2022  
MAJOR: PUBLIC HEALTH

### **What skills/mindsets/attitudes did you learn while a student at Valor that helped you during your four years in college?**

I got used to a heavy workload of assignments. This helped my transition to large workloads in college. Another skill would definitely have to be being able to write a 10-page essay. Valor was able to expand my skills in writing throughout my high school years which made it so much easier for me in college.

### **What do you wish you had known about college going in that could have helped you be even more successful?**

I wish I had known the importance of building a relationship with your professors. I think this is very important considering that having these kinds of relationships will not only help you get to know your professors better, but will help when asking for letters of recommendation in the future.

### **How did your world perspective grow or change as a result of your time in college?**

My world perspective has grown drastically as a result of my time in college. I have grown accustomed to what real life is really like and it has pushed me to change my level of thinking as well. I have also been pushed to become more independent and self-disciplined.

### **What have you enjoyed most about your experience at CSUN?**

Throughout my college experience, the thing I have enjoyed most about CSUN is the environment and all the new people you get to meet each year.

### **What do you plan on doing with your degree in the future?**

As an expected graduate this Spring 2022, I am majoring in Public Health. With this degree, I hope to serve my community by becoming a health educator and teaching individuals about important health matters. I would one day like to create an intervention that can help a group of people with their health needs.

### **Is there anything else that you would like to share, or any other advice you would give to the current students and staff at Valor?**

The only advice that I would like to give to students at Valor is to not be afraid. Being afraid to do something new is completely normal, but never be afraid to test your limits!!



## RKHS CLASS OF 2020-2021

### JORRDY UTUY MEJIA

RKHS ALUMNUS CLASS OF 2021  
GAP YEAR  
LOS ANGELES TRADE TECHNICAL COLLEGE  
MAJOR: DIGITAL MEDIA

Jorrdy is currently taking a gap year after graduating from RKHS in June of 2021. He shares that taking a gap year after high school was best for him and what he needed after almost two years of distance learning. With so much uncertainty for the academic year after graduation, he wasn't sure if going to college right away would have been the right path since classes would still be mostly online. Now that he has spent some time out of school and working, he has reflected on the experience and has a better idea of what he plans to do after his gap year. Here's a little more about his experience:



Jorrdy can be shy and doesn't often take pictures but here is a picture of him and his good friend, Lance!

#### **How have you been spending your time since graduating from RKHS?**

After graduating from RKHS, I enjoyed some time off in the summer and fall before looking for jobs. I was able to find a job in construction and have been working there for the past several months. I am currently working on enrolling in college to begin in the Fall of 2022.

#### **How has taking a gap year been beneficial to your post high schools plans?**

I've been able to use my gap year to think harder about what goals I have for myself and what I want to do and major in while in college.

#### **What are your plans for after your gap year? How did you come to that decision?**

Now that I had time off I want to get back into school and work towards my goal of studying Animation/Digital Media. It has always been my goal to go back to school, but I knew I would do it at my own pace. I have a strong support system which has also motivated me to go back to school.

#### **What are you most looking forward to post COVID?**

One thing I'm really looking forward to like I'm sure many other people is to be able to see my friends and family more frequently and visit places that would otherwise be closed because of COVID restrictions.

#### **What advice do you have for students who will be graduating high school soon?**

Some advice I would give to student who are almost graduating would be to remember to take breaks if you need them, do things at your pace.



# BRIGHT STAR SCHOOLS ALUMNI SUPPORT & COLLEGE SUCCESS TEAM

All Bright Star Schools Alums, 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 2016-2021, we will be there to help you navigate, thrive, and succeed in graduating from higher education.

## STEPHANIE CALDERON

**BA, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES  
M.ED. CSU, LONG BEACH COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

Stephanie Calderon has over 6 years of experience supporting students and their families in college access and success programs. She currently serves as the Alumni Support and College Success Coordinator for Rise Kohyang High School. Her goal is to support all RKHS Alumni with their post-secondary plans to ensure they accomplish their goals and aspirations for the future.

Stephanie is a first-generation college graduate. She obtained her bachelors in 2014 from UCLA in Women Studies. Upon graduating college she decided she wanted to help facilitate the process for applying and earning a degree for youth in her community of Los Angeles.

**RKHS ASCS COORDINATOR  
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2020 & 2021  
SCALDERON@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG**



## MIKE CARRERA

**BA, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE  
M.ED. AND PPS, UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE**

Mike Carrera has worked in education for over seven years, five of which have been at Bright Star Schools. Mike is a first-generation college graduate and earned his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of California, Riverside in Latin American Studies and History. He also earned his Pupil Personnel Services credential and Master's in Education degree in 2019 in Education Counseling from the University of La Verne.

Throughout the years, Mike has held various roles at BSSCA and has assisted students and families on multiple levels. He is passionate about supporting the student body at BSSCA and is a firm believer that higher education can positively shift a student's life and career choices. As the new ASCS Coordinator, Mike is determined to assist all BSSCA Alums in navigating higher education and in contributing to students' success in college and career.

**BSSCA ASCS COORDINATOR  
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2017 - 2021  
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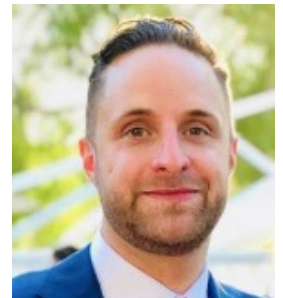
## KYLE PETRIE

**BA, BOWDOIN COLLEGE**

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.

Kyle Petrie has worked in urban public education for over 13 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.

**VAHS ASCS COORDINATOR  
SUPPORTING CLASS OF 2017 - 2021  
KPETRIE@BRIGHTSTARSCHOOLS.ORG**



## GENOVEVA CORTES

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

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.

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.

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

