



Spotlight on over 40 businesses supporting resource families in Ventura County; businesses provide discounts to resource families caring for children and teens.

Ventura County Children and Family Services' Foster VC Kids Businesses with Heart (BWH) program, has now grown to over 40 Ventura County business locations. The BWH program offers discounts on goods and services to resource families and caregivers, some even including internships, mentorship and job opportunities. There is no cost for the businesses who in turn offer savings for the resource families. Learn more at www.fostervckids.org/bwh.



Businesses participating in the BWH program include automotive services, salons, florists, real estate, counseling, dental and legal services, educational and extracurricular activities, retail and restaurants. BWH corporate partner, **Chipotle Mexican Grill**, has hosted four Ventura County job fairs in the last year and a half, and has hired more than 16 former foster teens. Scotty Shadix, Field Leader with Chipotle Mexican Grill says the company is “a culture of

empowerment” and partnering with Ventura County Children and Family Services' Foster VC Kids is “a natural fit with how we conduct business.” Shadix adds, these youth are “so driven, they’ve overcome some significant challenges and they’re incredibly reliable. They seize the opportunity.”

Kevin Brannon of Port Hueneme and founder of the Reel Guppy Outdoors program, spent some of his childhood with resource families and in youth shelters but found fishing at the Pier as a



way to connect with nature. Brannon launched the **Reel Guppy Outdoors** program to share his passion for fishing and the sea with all youth in his community, especially those who grow up in care. Two years ago, Brannon became a BWH partner because, he said, “I want to encourage youth by introducing them to fishing and being outdoors. I want to teach kids that they can lead a good life, especially kids who have been through trauma.” Brannon

understands their perspective and says to the youth “know that you are a worthy, valuable person.” Brannon’s company will be offering mentorship opportunities to local youth this year, teaching them about business and careers in marine biology.



“Any business can support Ventura County Children and Family Services’ Foster VC Kids, BWH program,” says Dan Collier, aka “the Big Cheese” of **PizzaMan Dan’s**, who became a BWH partner last year to support families and the youth they care for. “Offer your unique business services to youth and their families, it doesn’t have to be a cash donation,” he advises. Collier decided stop doing paid advertising, choosing instead to

make pizza donations to organizations that help local youth and adults in need. “Last year we donated \$100,000 worth of pizza and food to hardworking organizations in the cities we serve,” said Collier who feels that giving back is “a powerful tool to support our community.”

Jaci Johnson, Program Coordinator/Resource Family Recruitment, Development & Support for Ventura County Children and Family Services’ BWH program says,

“We work to ensure children and families in our community are connected with the resources and opportunities to help our youth thrive. Working together – social workers, businesses, coaches, teachers, volunteers and resource parents – we are all responsible for nurturing these children and teens so they can grow into healthy adulthood.”

About Ventura County Children and Family Services' Foster VC Kids

Recognized as a best practice leader statewide in the family recruitment and support component of child welfare, Ventura County Children and Family Services' Foster VC Kids was developed to increase the amount of loving resource families who are ready to take in children in need in Ventura County. This initiative provides resource families with ongoing support services, trauma-informed training, and mentorship to enhance the safety, permanency and well-being of Ventura County's youth and families. Learn how Ventura County Children and Family Services' Foster VC Kids is making a difference throughout Ventura County, www.fostervckids.org.

<http://vcbusinessjournal.com/2019/04/spotlight-40-businesses-supporting-resource-families-ventura-county/>