



*Attitude. Harmony. Achievement.*

## SUMMER 2018 Update

### WE NEED YOU MORE THAN EVER

Since 1999, AHA! has steadily grown from serving a few dozen youth per year to touching 5000+ lives annually. Many of the funds we raise to do this work come from grants; and while we are over-the-top grateful for all grants we receive, that funding is almost always inconsistent from year to year. Even our most loyal foundations have non-repeating rules for funding. As this is a gap year for some, we are currently pressed to fill in major funding gaps.

We want to express our gratitude to you, too, for all you give and how you have always supported our mission. Please help us now continue to serve year round in-school, after-school, and during the summer.

- Jennifer Freed, PhD and 25 AHA! Staff

## AHA! ROCK THE WALK – SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2018



This year we are taking our fall fundraiser downtown! We invite families, friends, and businesses to create teams and walk, run, and bike together in celebration of our beloved community.

On Sunday, November 4, we will gather at Stella Mare, near the bird refuge, and follow a route along the beachside bike path to a post-walk party at the parking lot/patio of Loquita Restaurant. Festivities include live music and dancing, goods sold by local vendors, a scrumptious lunch, wine tasting, and a kid's zone for young ones.

Register at [www.aharockthewalk.org](http://www.aharockthewalk.org). We ask that participants raise or donate \$250. Children ages 5-16 are invited to join for a \$15 donation—bring children under five free of charge! Funds support AHA!'s mission: inspiring communities to feel safe, seen, celebrated, and emotionally connected.

## AHA! TEACHER TRAININGS

Due to the success of the AHA! Method and an increasing recognition of the importance of social-emotional learning in schools, AHA! Facilitators and Executive team are being increasingly invited to deliver trainings to educators and youth program providers. This past summer and fall, we brought the AHA! Method to over 100 educators in after-school programs in Port Hueneme and Santa Barbara; teachers and counselors at Carpinteria Middle School; and at Santa Barbara High School. Follow-up training and coaching will be offered at CMS and SBHS throughout the year.

San Marcos High School student:

*The discussion about repairing relationships was very important because a lot of people don't know how to recover relationships.*

## SPOTLIGHTS

PHOTO: Carly Otness



### Focus on AHA! Youth: Perla Sandoval

Perla is a senior at Santa Barbara High School. She has been with AHA! since 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and was recently accepted to UC Santa Cruz, where she plans to study either marine biology or sociology. She is currently an active AHA! Peace Builder and will be one of our performers at Sing It Out on April 30<sup>th</sup>.

About her experience with AHA!, she says, "I really pushed myself in high school to get to college. I told myself if I had the support of people at AHA!, I would make it – and it happened! As a person, I've grown a lot. AHA! helped me learn how to be more open with adults, and how to speak with people when I need help, and I think that is one of the most important things that I really needed. AHA! helped me get to know who I was as a person, too. In 8<sup>th</sup> grade I didn't see myself as a caring person, but in AHA! I have people telling me 'You're really nice,' or 'you're really outgoing,' or 'you have a spunky personality.' I never would have thought that was what I was going to become... I'm a first-generation college student. I'm proud. I hope I am making my three younger sisters proud and that I can push them to reach their limits too. I want my 7<sup>th</sup> grade

sister to join AHA! next year. My other sisters are too young yet to think about it, but I think they will, because they're growing up with me and I want to set that example for them."

We are so proud of Perla! She has been a wonderful participant throughout the years and will be missed by her peers and by AHA! staff.

### Focus on Staff: Michelle LeBeau, MSW

Michelle LeBeau is a core facilitator and program leader at AHA!. She has been working with youth for eleven years, since the age of 22. She earned her Master's in Social Work in 2013, and is near to completion of her LCSW licensure. She is instrumental to AHA! not just for her facilitation work and leadership, but also for her skills as a therapist; she is one of several therapists on the AHA! staff who offer a set of six free family therapy sessions to youth and families in need. She is an EMDR/trauma-informed care therapist.

Michelle and her husband Aaron Liggett married in 2015. They grew up together in the same small town of Manhattan Beach, but did not start dating until years later while in graduate school in separate states. They hope to raise a family here in Santa Barbara.

Michelle was recently promoted to program leader, and is heading our new AHA! Peace Builders program at La Colina Junior High, as well as the Carpinteria High School in-school and after-school programs.

About her work with AHA!, Michelle says, "I love this work in part because I have always felt connected to my inner child and the struggles of being a teenager, and because of the interpersonal accountability and integrity AHA! staff encourage among each other and provide within the community we serve. The teens in the AHA! programs are truly inspiring and rewarding to work with." We love Michelle's compassion, humor and warmth!



From Kareem Battle, Social Studies and AVID teacher at Santa Barbara Junior High School:

*I truly support AHA! and similar programs because of the love and support you provide these young people to be happier and healthier human beings. You are the true inspirations for their success. You have no idea how many times I hear the students say, "it's Wednesday, AHA! Day, LETS GO!!!!!" It's a little chant and I love it because I know they love it. Thank you for all that you do for all our kids."*

## NEWSWORTHY



### **AHA! Executive Team in the Big Apple!**

At the end of March, Jennifer Freed and Rendy Freedman will be consulting with and educating youth providers at The Meeting House, an out-of-school non-profit program in New York City:  
[www.themeetinghouseafterschool.org/blog/2017/2/24/jennifer-freeds-sel-formula-attitude-harmony-achievement](http://www.themeetinghouseafterschool.org/blog/2017/2/24/jennifer-freeds-sel-formula-attitude-harmony-achievement)



### **The AHA! Card Featured in the *Santa Barbara Independent***

[www.independent.com/news/2017/feb/23/aha-offers-discount-card-kids/](http://www.independent.com/news/2017/feb/23/aha-offers-discount-card-kids/)



### **La Colina Junior High School Joins the AHA! Peace Builders Initiative**

We received a grant award from the Open Society Foundations to start a new AHA! Peace Builders Initiative at La Colina Junior High School! Starting with their training on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 10 eighth grade youth became AHA! Peace Builders; they will become part of a weekly club to end hate speech and promote inclusivity, kindness, and respect for everyone.

We hope to enroll more youth there – if you know parents or students at La Colina, please tell them about AHA! Peace Builders!



### **Sing It Out Documentary by Culture Spark Media Set to Release by April 30<sup>th</sup>**

This documentary by filmmakers Carly Otness and Brett Bollier follows youth and staff in AHA!'s 2016 Sing It Out after-school group. It highlights the uniqueness and impact of the AHA! Method.

## RAFFLE!

### **Enter to Win! A Week at Santa Claus Lane Beach House or a Costa Rica Retreat**

Purchase raffle tickets for two INCREDIBLE raffle items to support AHA!

Winners will be drawn at Sing It Out, but you don't need to be present to win.

Buy one for \$25 or six for \$100 – mix and match to win one of these great getaways!

Buy tickets at Sing It Out or call Roxy at the AHA! office to purchase by phone: 805-770-7200.

Choose from one of two fantastic vacations

#### **One week at CASA SURF in Santa Teresa, Costa Rica**



#### **One week at the Mermaid Beach House on Padaro**



San Marcos High School student:

*My favorite discussion was about emotional flooding, and how the old brain could take over the new brain. I really enjoyed the games and my small group.*

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Santa Barbara High School student:

*What's meaningful is that it's helped me a lot. With building better communication with my peers or family or friends. It's helped the classroom a lot. Now we know how to do things a better way.*



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