

Offering More Ways to Grow and Give Back in 2023

Dear AES Friends and Family,

I have often shared that what I love most about AES is that it gives me the opportunity to give back in a way that is meaningful to me. My life and career trajectory were positively impacted by both interactions with adult mentors during high school and college and the chances I was given to step into a leadership role at a young age. I'm thrilled that we're able to facilitate even more of these kinds of opportunities in 2023 with expanded AES leadership roles.



First, we have four open Board of Directors positions: two for youth board members aged 18-24 and two for adult board members aged 25+. These positions are a chance to help lead an established, thriving nonprofit that is doing great work throughout California. It's rare to see a nonprofit set aside board positions specifically for youth, and I'm particularly proud to be part of an organization that understands the importance of youth voice.

Second, we are in the process of building both an Advisory Board and a Youth Advisory Board. Both boards will allow volunteers to share their time and expertise with AES in a way that fits their lifestyle and circumstances. No required meetings, no mandatory hours. Instead, a chance to work with AES in a way that is meaningful to you and on your timeline. We are particularly excited to welcome volunteer mentors, marketing experts, fundraising and event planning leaders, and programming experts. We're going to have an incredible year together!

This month I call on you, our champions and supporters, to help us reach community members who would be great fits for our open Board and Advisory Board positions. You know better than anyone what it means to have a heart for the work of AES. Please consider forwarding this call to action to a potential volunteer in your network. We have so much energy and enthusiasm going into 2023 and I can't wait to welcome more people into our AES family.

-Stephanie Rahlfs
AES Board Chair

A Message from Co-Founder Bernie Davitto



Those forty years have been spent in both academia and in the field, where we have been able to tap in to and learn from the lived experience of all major stakeholder groups, from youth themselves to family members, practitioners, and policymakers. While it has been frustrating to observe the limited results of current system improving efforts, we have been equally impressed by the resiliency of young people and their willingness to contribute - also by the creativity and collaborative potential of youth development practitioners and their

organizations. As co-founders, CC and I are so encouraged by AES's growth as an organization, the combined strength of our staff and Board and our collective commitment to getting better at getting better ourselves!

We are also encouraged by the strong correlation between our own work and the findings of several decades of research, development, and experimentation in the youth development field. The research strongly supports our conclusion that until youth serving systems focus on getting better at getting better *AS SYSTEMS*, the distance between problem identification and corrective action will remain substantial.

Last year, as a result of this congruence, we took on the role of "catalytic philanthropy," providing seed money and technical assistance to a number of innovative youth serving organizations working to carry out creative youth serving collaborations that reduce the distance between youth and the developmental resources they need to succeed. This year, as part of our expanded research capacity, we will be exploring the potential of "catalytic thinking" (a set of practices that make explicit the simple factors that create positive results, so those results can be consistently replicated and scaled) as an organizing framework for working together to bring out the best in all of us.

Refresh, Reconnect and Re-engage



On January 14th, AES hosted a board retreat for our partners at Feed Sacramento

Homeless. Board members and Executive Director Bobbie Wooten got together to restructure and discuss possibilities to enhance their organization. Feed Sacramento Homeless and AES connected again on February 4th for part 2 of the board retreat to solidify organizational goals, mission statement, and values. We look forward to seeing out partners grow in this process and hope to continue supporting other nonprofits in getting better at getting better.

Meet Pathways to Success Mentor Stephanie Zaragoza

These last few weeks our Director of Special Projects, CC Carter, and Director of Youth Programs, Ana Taukolo, have been busy training our newest Pathways to Success Mentors. We are thrilled to have Stephanie on the team and look forward to all she will accomplish in the coming months.

My name is Stephanie Zaragoza. I was born in La Piedad, Michoacan, Mexico and moved to California when I was 4 years old. I basically have lived all my life in Sacramento. I am a first generation college student at American River College and I am majoring in General Business and Communications. I will be transferring over to Sacramento State soon to pursue a bachelor's degree in Communications to be able to go to law school. One professional goal is to become a lawyer in the immigration field to help my community. A personal goal of mine is to be light to the world everywhere I go and give by grace what I have received by grace. "As iron sharpens iron."



Community Connections

Family Game Night at Fruitridge Community Collaborative!



On Saturday January 28th, our community partners at Feed Sacramento Homeless hosted a Family Game Night event at the Fruitridge Community Collaborative. There were lots of arcade games, board games, dancing competitions, and free food! Young members of the AES family attended this event and had lots of fun on a Saturday night. Thank you for having us at your event Feed Sacramento Homeless family!

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