



SONOMA VALLEY MENTORING ALLIANCE

Matching responsible adults with at-risk kids for social and academic success



Our start:

The Sonoma Valley Mentoring Alliance was started in 1996 at Flowery Elementary School as a small program to help struggling students read better.

Original funding from the California Department of Education was for 'Project Libros' focusing mainly on academics. But over the course of the grant, we realized that these at-risk kids needed much more than tutoring; they needed caring, adult role models willing to make serious, long-term commitments to help them succeed, not just in school, but in life. Thus, the 'Stand By Me' Mentoring Program was born. In 1999, we expanded to serve students at Altimira Middle School, as well as El Verano Elementary.

Over the next five years, we established a fully-staffed and fully-stocked Mentor Center on every public school campus within the Sonoma school district.

What we do:

To date, over 1500 disadvantaged children have been matched with a mentor! The relationships here have far surpassed the national average. According to the latest research, a mentor match in the U.S. lasts between five months and two years. The mentor matches in Sonoma last an average of eight years, and as a result, these kids are thriving! Sonoma has become "a community raising its children." Our hope is that our mentees will one day become mentors themselves...a wonderful way to pay it forward!

A single story:

Miriam will never forget the perilous journey she took from Mexico to the United States when she was just four years old. Her grandmother woke her at sunrise to say that she was going to 'El Norte,' to be reunited with her parents. Miriam was enrolled in El Verano School, not knowing a word of English. In the fourth grade, she was fortunate to be matched with her mentor, Linda, a professional Latina. Linda became her role model, her inspiration, and her friend. Linda encouraged her to dream big and to be the change agent for her own life.

In 2010, Miriam graduated from Sonoma Valley High School and was accepted at 10 prestigious universities. She chose Macalester College in Minnesota, studying public health and the disparities that exist for minority populations. With a four-year scholarship from the Mentoring Alliance and on-going support from Linda, Miriam is the first in her family to go to college and one of our first mentees to graduate from college! She is now on her way to citizenship and working in Washington, DC on a two-year fellowship in biomedical research.

Miriam sums up her success: "Having Linda as my mentor allowed me to see a completely different world of possibilities. Growing up with her enabled me to realize my potential at a young age. Because of Linda, I have the motivation to follow my dreams and become the person I want to be. Thanks to her, I'm on my way!"

Our future:

We look toward what mentoring has meant to the kids in our program. Our hope is that these mentoring relationships that start in elementary school will last a lifetime. You cannot put a value on that, because it is priceless!



Impact100 Sonoma

has awarded two Community Grants to Sonoma Mentoring Alliance: \$7,500 for their Girls' Empowerment Fund (2011), \$15,000 to purchase STEM learning tools (2015), and two Impact Finalist Grants of \$13,375 (2012) and \$20,000 (2014).