



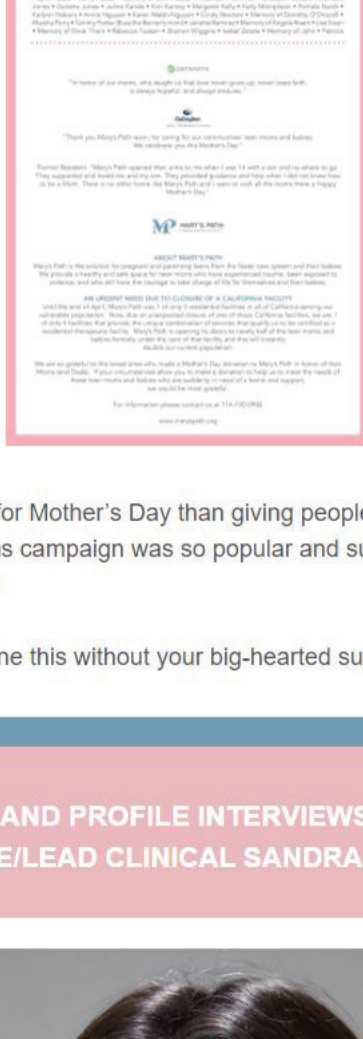
# MARY'S PATH

Changing Lives Two at a Time

## SALUTING YOU FOR MAKING OUR MOMS FOR MOMS CAMPAIGN AN OVERWHELMING SUCCESS

Despite not being able to gather together for our Spring Gala, your big hearts saved the day! We took a chance and launched our first-ever Moms for Moms campaign, which, thanks to all of you and your overwhelming generosity, was a HUGE success, raising more than \$90,000!

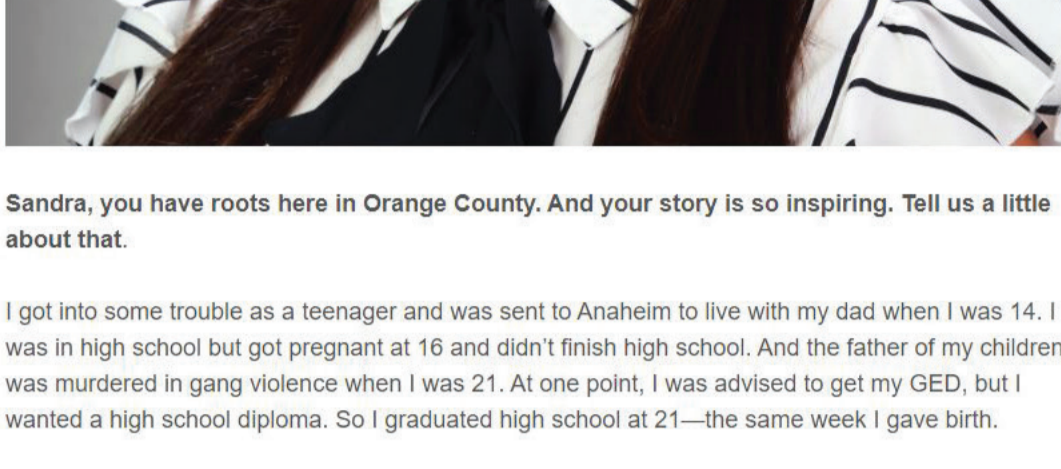
I hope you all had a chance to see our beautiful full-page tribute in the *Orange County Register* on Mother's Day. We love sharing the joy, so please check out the picture



We can think of no better tribute for Mother's Day than giving people the chance to honor moms and dads too! And the Moms for Moms campaign was so popular and successful, we're bringing it back—look for it for Mother's Day 2022!

And again, we could not have done this without your big-hearted support.

## ANNOUNCEMENT AND PROFILE INTERVIEWS OF NEW HEAD OF SERVICE/LEAD CLINICAL SANDRA BARELA



**Sandra, you have roots here in Orange County. And your story is so inspiring. Tell us a little about that.**

I got into some trouble as a teenager and was sent to Anaheim to live with my dad when I was 14. I was in high school but got pregnant at 16 and didn't finish high school. And the father of my children was murdered in gang violence when I was 21. At one point, I was advised to get my GED, but I wanted a high school diploma. So I graduated high school at 21—the same week I gave birth.

I then went to Santa Ana college—I was so excited and proud of myself for being there. I had a college ID! I wrote a paper in one of my classes about wanting to make a difference for teen moms and gangbangers so that people didn't die needlessly.

I worked at an accounting firm and got demoted because they needed to hire somebody with a bachelor's degree. And I decided I was never going to lose a job because I didn't have the education. That was something that was in my control. I wasn't ready to pay back my student loans, so I stayed in school and went to Cal State Fullerton—I took my kids to class with me.

**How did you end up here at Mary's Path?**

I started at Orangewood and got promoted very quickly. I worked in OC for 10 years, and at the end, I was a child abuse investigator [and collaborated with] the Costa Mesa police department. And I found my passion and had a mission without knowing it. During that time, I also interned at Mary's Path providing therapy for the girls.

But I wasn't doing anything clinical, so I went to LA County and became a therapist. [This was when] there was another shift in LA toward evidence-based practices. And so, I'm trained in every single evidence-based practice you can think of because I wanted to make sure I knew what I was doing.

When I saw the ad [for this job], I wasn't looking for work. But I thought how wonderful it would be to come full circle and provide services for pregnant teens.

**What's your biggest challenge?**

I have a challenge ahead of me to shift the culture from the old mentality of group homes and make it clinical in the sense that everybody needs to be trained—from the top to the bottom. When I say from the top—it's like the analogy about cups being full. We have to fill our cups so we can fill our staff's cups, and our staff's cups can fill the girls' cups, and the girls can fill the babies' cups.

We need to model communication, empathy, and understanding and put into practice the services these youths in foster care deserve and are entitled to have.

**What does your job entail?**

It's still a work in progress since it's a new position. My task is to develop the program.

**What motivates you?**

The passion. The key is always to be passionate. My leadership style is pulling on that string of passion to help performances. We're in this field for a reason.

And I'm really passionate about making generational change for the babies. We're planting seeds for these moms. Age 0 to 5 is such a critical stage for babies to build attachments. Based on my background, it takes three generations to make that complete shift from generational trauma.

These girls come into the system. They were abused and neglected, and that comes from who knows how many generations before. And so we need to provide that psychoeducation and help [them form] attachments with their babies, so the [cycle] doesn't continue. We know if the attachment in babies ages 0-5 is severed or doesn't exist, they [can develop] personality disorders and severe mental health issues.

**What do you do for fun?**

I bicycle. Before starting this job, (and I want to go back to doing it), I rode about 20 miles a day. I bike all over OC. When I got the phone call that I got this job, I was on a bike ride in San Francisco.

**Who are your role models?**

Supervisors can make or break you. I had one supervisor who was phenomenal. And I said I'm going to be that type of supervisor. The second role model would be my past director, who taught me how to be a supervisor. It's a very tough shift to go from clinician to manager. I have to make sure the policies and procedures are in compliance. But, at the same time, you can't miss the human skills that enable you to fill the cups of our staff so that they can fill the cups of our parents and so on.

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Dear Friends and Family of Mary's Path,**

What a great summer this has been for all of us at Mary's Path. With your support, we have experienced tremendous growth, despite the challenges in the system. I am so grateful to have you with us every step of the way.

Mary's Path has now fully implemented our strategic plan. Our mental health team serving the teen moms and babies in our care has more than doubled in size. And we've done this while the foster system faced challenges. Sadly, there are now only three facilities in all of California serving pregnant and parenting teens in the foster system. We are so proud—and grateful—that Mary's Path is one of them. The need for Mary's Path has never been greater, and our services are more in demand than ever. Our facility is currently at full capacity for babies. In fact, we have welcomed five new babies just since March, and three more are on the way!

My heart is full when I think of all the wonderful gifts you have generously bestowed upon Mary's Path. This summer, I had the pleasure of meeting members from the Catholic Daughters of America Court Blessed Sacrament from Westminster. They held a baby shower for our teen moms and babies. We were delighted by the numerous baskets of baby gifts and fun diaper cake!

I also had the pleasure of reconnecting with and introducing Mary's Path to friends and colleagues. Mary's Path gained a new supporter who joined our family after reading about my new job on LinkedIn. Michelle and I were in an executive leadership program together many years ago when we first started our careers in public service. After almost 30 years, it was a pleasure to see her again and hear about how much she loved our Moms for Moms campaign and the personal connection she felt to the mission of Mary's Path.

Most importantly, our Mary's Path family has continued to support us through this ongoing pandemic. But, unfortunately, our home remains closed to volunteers and mentors due to COVID-19 regulations protecting the health and safety of our very vulnerable population of babies and pregnant moms. But I'm so hopeful now that the vaccine is widely available, and I can see the light rising on the horizon that we will soon be able to welcome back our volunteers. I am so eager; I cannot wait for the day that happens.

Nemo and I hope you all experienced the joy of our beautiful Southern California summer or wherever your travels may have taken you this year.

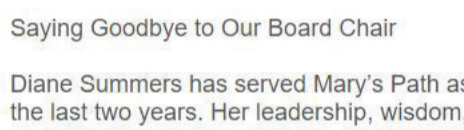


*Nemo and I bravely tried a new sport, standup paddling boarding!*

In gratitude,

Jill Dominguez

## DIANE SUMMERS: HONORING OUR OUTGOING BOARD CHAIR



### Farewell Diane Summers

Saying Goodbye to Our Board Chair

Diane Summers has served Mary's Path as a member of the Board since 2014 and as Board Chair for the last two years. Her leadership, wisdom, and strength were so appreciated, especially while we underwent numerous changes, including instituting the new mental health program and installing new leadership.

Diane shares her parting words, "It has been a pleasure and a blessing to serve on the board at Mary's Path. And the past 18 months were the best of the seven years I've been a part of the organization due to my current fellow board members and our new ED. Together you are the best I've seen for Mary's Path and the girls it serves. So please continue to take care of each other."

On behalf of the Board and staff, we wish Diane well in her new adventures halfway across the country! And, paraphrasing the always wise Winnie-the-Pooh, "How lucky we are to have someone that makes saying goodbye so hard."

## BABY MILESTONES

**Like any good organization, we rigorously measure our milestones. But we're especially blessed here at Mary's Path because many of those accomplishments can be measured in first smiles, first words, and first steps.**

**Here are a few of the accomplishments we're celebrating this season.**

- Two healthy baby girls were born here in June!
- Baby boy is learning how to stretch and roll as his mommy gives him some much-needed floor time.
- A 6-month-old baby girl tries solid food for the first time and loves it!
- A 6-month-old baby girl learns to roll onto her belly and discovers the world is even bigger than she knew! And, of course, she loves being able to sleep on her belly too!
- A toddler girl starts school at Head Start and is absolutely thriving! Mama is very proud.
- A toddler girl says new words every day and is also about to become a big sister!
- A one-year-old boy is receiving therapy services and is doing amazingly well—making huge strides every week!

## HAPPENINGS AROUND MARY'S PATH

### More Milestones

**"Remember to celebrate milestones as you prepare for the road ahead."—Nelson Mandela**

- Babies born since March 1st: **5**
- High School graduations: **1**
- Residents with jobs: **6**
- Entered college: **3**
- Earned a driver's license: **2**
- Safely transitioned into stable housing: **5**

## WELCOME, HOMEAID!



We were so excited when the team from HomeAid Orange County dropped by Mary's Path for a tour. What a thrill it was for the Mary's Path team to show Gina Scott, Executive Director of HomeAid, and her staff, through the homes they built for us 25 years ago!

These homes served their purpose and are a testament to great design, especially for teen moms and babies. We even brought out the original construction sign.

Thank you, HomeAid OC!

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