

UC San Diego and Just in Time Help College-Bound Foster Youth Overcome Obstacles

Donation drive collects essential supplies for transitioning foster youth

April 20, 2011

Christine Clark

This April, University of California, San Diego students, faculty and staff have teamed up with Just In Time for Foster Youth for the "2011 College-Bound Drive," running through April 29, to collect essential supplies for college-bound youth like James Lee. Lee, a foster child, came to the campus last year without family support or basic resources, but fortunately received the help he needed to start his college career both with supplies and gaining a sense of belonging.

"I came to UC San Diego hoping to begin a new journey," said Lee, now a freshman planning a double major in biochemistry and theatre. "The welcoming atmosphere at the school and the supplies, like a quilt, bedding and kitchenware that I received from Just In Time made me feel comfortable and very supported. I never felt alone or had to worry about basic survival and that made a huge difference."

The College-Bound campaign has collection points at a dozen locations across the UC San Diego campus. The suggested supplies range from backpacks and calculators to comforters, desk lamps, laundry baskets and bedding. Donations are also accepted through the UC San Diego Financial Aid Office.

This annual event is conducted by Just In Time (JIT), a San Diego nonprofit that provides urgent support, caring guidance and crucial resources for foster youth at the most critical points in their transition to an independent, productive life. This is the second year JIT has partnered with UC San Diego.

"We know firsthand that Just In Time provides valuable and much needed support to our incoming students transiting from foster care," said Ann Klein, director of UC San Diego's Financial Aid Office and co-chair of the drive.

Ed Abeyta, director of K-16 programs at UC San Diego Extension and co-chair of the drive added, "We encourage all to contribute to this drive; all donations, regardless of size and value, provide meaningful support to former foster youth as they begin their college careers."

This year's drive is also part of the UC San Diego 50th Anniversary Volunteer50 initiative. The Volunteer50 is a call to service from Chancellor Marye Anne Fox challenging all students, faculty, staff, alumni and university friends to perform 50 hours of volunteer service during UC San Diego's 50th Anniversary celebration, from September 2010 through June 2011.

"We are incredibly grateful and excited about this effort by the UC San Diego community to help foster youth in need," said Don Wells, JIT Executive Director. "In any given year in San Diego County, nearly 300 foster youth turn 18 and about 75 are accepted into college. The assistance this drive generates helps our college-bound youth overcome the serious obstacles to success that most of count on from our family to help us navigate."

UC San Diego is committed to helping students from all backgrounds and circumstances. In addition to helping with the College-Bound Drive, UC San Diego's Guardian Scholars Program, working with partners like JIT, is committed to supporting former foster youth with a wide range of support services and mentoring. Like Lee, incoming students who are transitioning from foster care will find the support they need to begin life as a college student through the university's Guardian Scholars Program, in addition to programs such as JIT.

Unlike most youth, who still have a family safety net when they enter college, foster teens must care for themselves, often without a place to turn for essentials like a laptop or school supplies. Without some kind of support, statistics show only 1-3 percent of foster youth graduate from college. However, out of 195 JIT participants surveyed this year, 37 percent expected to graduate this year and another 27 percent will in 2012.

JIT and UC San Diego offer an ideal partnership that helps turn other challenging statistics around for foster youth. With the help of committed donors and volunteers, JIT and UC San Diego provide transitioning foster youth the assistance, resources and personal guidance they need to become functioning, self-sufficient adults.

For more information about Just In Time, visit www.JITFosterYouth.org. For more information about UC San Diego's Guardian Scholars Program, go to: <http://www.ucsd.edu/current-students/finances/financial-aid/types/scholarships/guardian.html>

Media Contact: Christine Clark, 858-534-7618, or ceclark@ucsd.edu