

Becky Fortier

The most valuable work that Becky Fortier does is not part of her job description. Becky is a secretary at South Tahoe Middle School and has been for many years. Her desk is accessible to the adults that need her and is a beacon for the kids that need her. The kids know that Becky cares about each one of them and is willing to listen, to mediate, advocate, and to help problem solve.

Molly Takaki, a South Tahoe High School student now, remembered Becky and the positive influence she had on her life. She writes in her nomination of Becky “She was the one who all the kids would go to for advice. I would go see her in the morning and she would always listen to all I had to say when my best friend and I got into a fight, Becky fixed it. She watched out for us all three years. She really cares about the kids and it doesn’t matter if they are a “troublemaker” or not. It doesn’t matter if you just met her, she was always there if you needed someone. Becky lets all of the kids in her office and it was always crowded. She always gave us advice and kept an open mind. She supports the students and gives tons of encouragement. Many kids got their grades up because she gave them support through school and family life, no matter how bad the situation.” Molly’s remarks tell the story of one person, one secretary that is touching kids every day that has touched the lives of hundreds over the years.

We can all learn from Becky, a no nonsense, and no bull, straight up person. Becky has formed small groups of kids that are struggling with the lure of gangs, letting them talk, and encouraging them to be all that they can be by

staying away from gangs. Becky has served as a CASA volunteer for numerous years, connecting with teens that have never had a connection before. Her job description as a secretary?... she probably fulfills that job well too, but as a friend to middle school kids, she goes above and beyond what any job description could ever ask of her. Congratulations, Becky.

Hank Barbachano

We each model the behaviors that we want to see in our own children, or in the children and teens that we work with. It often feels a little like beating a head against a brick wall when the attitude back is less than appreciative. But that modeling paid off in the difference that Hank Barbachano, made in the life of Joey as his CASA. In fact, Hank's buttons should be bursting this afternoon as he hears the story of why Joey nominated him as his champion. Joey shared his story this way. "I met Hank over two years ago. I had just moved into foster care, barely knowing what was going on. Hank has completely changed my life. I can't imagine life without him. Every single time I see Hank, he helps me through obstacles and troubles in the way. I attended Herbert Green Middle School two years ago. If I were to gather all of the referral and detention slips I had, it would turn into a huge pile. I had so many F's and D's in my report card. Then Hank tried to tell me to do better in school and all I did was be disrespectful to him. He didn't deserve that. I had an epiphany and now I get A's and I don't have any referrals or detentions. It's all thanks to Hank.

Hank drives me to Court or to visit my Mom. I can't believe I used to be so ignorant and disrespectful to such a kind man. Once he got into an argument with my attorney at court and all of a sudden Hank told my attorney that he was sorry. Then they got along again. Hank taught me that by saying "sorry", it could end conflicts and arguments. Such a good, generous, and caring man Hank is. CASA Hank has been with me through thick and thin.

He truly deserves this award as he is my Champion, my CASA, Hank Barbachano.”

This tribute by Joey speaks volumes about the difference one person can make for another. But this tribute isn't about any other person, what it is... is an eloquently written gift from Joey to Hank, a thank you to Hank for giving him the most precious gifts of all...his time, his caring, his encouragement, his consistency, and his belief that Joey could succeed. Thanks Joey for sharing this, and thanks Hank, for showing us all what a champion looks like in the world of this teen. Hank Barbachano, CASA and Champion.

Ian Hoey

Does every Superman wear a cape? Are they sometimes dressed like Clark Kent all the time and we never get to see the real Superman outfit? This superman hero disguises himself as a California Highway patrolman while at work but fills the role of family provider, step dad and hero to many.

Brennan Yarborough nominated his step dad and you'll soon understand why... In Ian's words, " Well, how does one begin to explain how someone is the champion of your life? Back when I was younger and didn't have much of a father figure in my life, my mother married Ian. We moved from our small apartment in Arizona to Ian's house in Sacramento. After a few weeks of living with Ian, I realized how "cool" he was. Ian had the awesome job of protecting the Governor of California, Arnold. Not only did he have a good job, he was good to my mom, brothers and sister. He has always taken care of us. He's kind of like Superman in a way, he takes care of the ones he loves he watches over people, and helps to keep the community safe as an officer of the law. Recently Ian was driving while talking to my mom when a Jeep flipped over on the freeway in front of him. Ian stopped to make sure the two girls were OK one had to be unbuckled and carried out of the car because she was dazed from the crash. Ian Hoey is the champion of my life and my step dad."

Well Ian, your secret is out now... a Superman hero to your stepson is the highest compliment and one that should be celebrated and we are happy to celebrate your hero status today. Congratulations, dad.

Tara Turrentine

Some students need more than a good teacher, some help with homework, advice on what classes to take...some students need school supplies, a winter coat, socks, underwear, clothing, money to purchase a year book...and do not have the resources to take care of these basic needs. Tara Turrentine goes above and beyond, as the McKinney –Vento family resource coordinator for Placerville Union School District. Hear what six students at Edwin Markham Middle School want us all to know about Tara.

Shane says, “One day I was having trouble at school so Tara dropped by and helped me along, then I started getting better grades.”

Elizabeth’s story to share is “She came to my house to visit my mom. Tara asks me if there is anything she can get for me, she is super nice to everyone who knows her. Also, Tara got me my agenda for school. If I didn’t get my agenda I would be in super trouble with my teachers. She also helps my sisters. I thank her for that. This is just some of the stuff Tara has done and why I think Tara is a champion.

Mariah C.’s story tells of Tara working diligently to find Mariah a foster home that she knew Mariah would flourish in. She was relentless According to Dr. Nancy Lynch. Tara connected with Vicki, having her agree to go through the process to become a foster parent and whose family Mariah is with now. Mariah says, “Tara helped me find a great home with wonderful people. I mean it’s a great help to have a home.

R. Hernandez and A. Canela each spoke in their native language; Spanish of the help that Tara gave them, sharing that she is an example of someone

helping those in need. One said, “ We don’t have money to buy everything for the school, but she helps us with everything so we can have everything like everyone else. My family and I love her.”

Mariah L. states, “She has my back and I have hers. She’ always been there for me. Tara has helped out my brother and me since we moved her. I’m glad I have had her in my life.”

These are just a few of he people that are part of Tara’s world which encompasses all of those students that fit the description of homeless through the McKinney Vento definition. These students are ready to learn and thrive after meeting Tara and having her give them the boost in services and that extra dose of “oomph” necessary to succeed despite challenging living circumstances.

Mariah C. sums up our feelings as well when she says of Tara, “Anyone can like Tara I mean, **come on**, she’s **so, so** nice.” And let us add, a champion in the eyes of **so, so** many. Tara Turrentine, congratulations.

Bob Hickman

“Have you ever known a person who works really hard for others?” This is the question that Alexis Morales asks the reader of her nomination for her champion, Bob Hickman. Bob Hickman, a teacher at Bijou Community School, believes in the possibilities and then works diligently to make all the possibilities happen, both in the classroom and in the dreams and hopes of the children-attending Bijou. Bijou has the highest percentage of free and reduced lunches, the greatest number of English language learners, newcomers from other countries, and those at the poverty level. Bob Hickman turns all of this into opportunity for the kids at Bijou and beyond.

Bob champions many things and Alexis highlights one of these in her nomination, which states, “ He started a project where students at the school bring canned goods for the Family Resource Center. All of this started when families that had no food came to the center to get food. but the center did not have enough. When he found out, he was thinking of ways to get food for these families. He made sketches of plans to promote this and came up with the tuna fish because it is a canned food. When my friends and I heard we went to help with the art projects he had thought of. And so now every Friday students and faculty bring canned good for those families that need help.” Alexis mentions one outreach, there is more...

The chocolate chip cookie scholarship fund for graduates that attended Bijou Community School has been a growing and resounding success. Bob believes that dreams can come true for all students and college should be a

reality for every student. He bakes cookies each evening almost, brings the fresh cookies to school where the leadership students sell them at \$.50 each at recess. Each year at the high school awards night, the Bijou student body president proudly gives out one of the most popular scholarships to graduating seniors, the Bijou alumni scholarships. Last year two scholarships of more than \$600 each were given, all from chocolate chip cookie revenue!! Every cookie that every child, parent, or staff buys adds to the dream of college.

In addition, each Friday, Bob's truck is loaded with a week's worth of recyclables collected by the Bijou staff and families that he then takes home to Reno to recycle (did I tell you he also commutes 120 miles a day to work with the greatest kids in the world?) He redeems them to add to the student body kitty of money.

Bob you are the chocolate in the cookie, the tuna in the can!!! Dreams do become reality for so many when they are fortunate enough to learn with Mr. Hickman what it means to be a community. According to Alexis it is this "In conclusion, Mr. Hickman thinks of the community before himself." Congratulations, Bob.

Orion Davis

It is unusual for a juvenile offender to nominate their probation officer as a Champion so when we received not one, but two nominations, for Orion Davis, a juvenile probation officer in South Lake Tahoe we knew that this was someone worthy of notice. The two nominators made sure that they listed him as their **ex**-probation officer, which says the most right there. Success stories are important for teens to share and for probation officers to be applauded for.

Nestor writes, “The person I nominated has made a difference in my life because he helped me to do good in school and to get off probation successfully. He would always lecture me and he would tell me that If I ever wanted to get off probation to I needed to stop hanging out with the people I used to hang out with and that I needed to come to school all the time. I started to do everything he told me to do and my life became easier when I started coming to school, stopped hanging out with the friends I use to. I didn’t get in trouble any more and I started to get good grades and off probation.”

This was great, but then we heard from **Martin**, as well, saying, “ He is my champion because he helped me stay on task at school and out, when I first started to get into trouble with the law. He would be the one giving me a reason why I should be afraid to be locked up or to get a violation of the law. He helped my by punishing me and doing his job. There was this one day I was at home sleeping and I remember seeing him at the door and I immediately woke up and let him in. He found a few things, confiscated them. At first, I was so angry. Then I thought if I have these things here, I’m

gonna still do the same thing and keep doing the same thing. I then found out this was only for my own good so I will avoid going to jail and I am never going to jail again.

Orion Davis has been made the unlikely but appropriate hero for two teens that can proudly say he is their **ex**-probation officer. We are certain that he will always be their champion. Congratulations, Orion.

Tony Bates

Everyone could use a Tony Bates in his or her lives but Shawn and his grandmother, Jean, are lucky enough to have their very own Tony Bates. What is a Tony Bates and why would we all love to have one for our very own? Tony is a Big Brother through the Big Brothers program for Shawn and has been for the last 21/2 years. Shawn, at 9, didn't write this nomination, his grandmother did. We would like to share her words about Tony.

“Tony has had a terrific impact as a role model in Shawn's life. Tony has become part of our family because of the love and dedication in his role as a Big Brother. Tony has always scheduled weekly times with Shawn and takes time to mentor him. He has stepped into roles with school and sports as well as providing overnight camping trips, air shows, Kings basketball games and more. He has taken steps to learn of Shawn's special needs emotionally and helped him to look toward the future. Tony takes the steps necessary to ensure that Shawn has his undivided attention.

Tony has always been available to assist me as a single grandmother on a very limited income. He helped with repairs such as the car, washing machine, helping us move, and jobs around the house. During last winter's snowstorm, we were without electricity and water. Tony walked over a mile into our country location to make sure we were OK. He took us to his home so we could do laundry and shower. He has made special trips to get groceries and other needed items. Without Tony, our lives would be dramatically different and the blessings he has brought to both Shawn and I am significant. Tony does everything freely and unconditionally.”

Now that Shawn's grandmother has described what a Tony Bates is, I bet you, like me, would like one for your very own but this Tony Bates is committed unconditionally to Shawn as his Big Brother and he is exactly where he should be and with the young man he is really meant to be with. **We'll** have to find our own! Congratulations to you Tony for being a Champion for Children. Do you have a twin?

Ray Scanell

Respect, admiration, dedication, effort, helpful, spirit, influence, trust, hero, champion. These are some ingredients in the recipe that makes up Independence High School counselor, Ray Scanell, as described by the four nominations he received from his current students. As a 22-year veteran of counseling, I am sure that former students have echoed these descriptive words for many years as well.

Kyle writes in his nomination, “ I personally have switched schools quite a few times and no teacher or counselor shows such initiative to truly be close with the youth. Ray and I have had our fair share of disputes but he always reminds me that he is always here for me. His influence has honestly guided my future by not letting me settle for a GED but pushing me to believe in myself to earn the full 240 units. Ray has helped countless students as years passed, believe in themselves and graduate with Indo pride including myself!”

Alex shares that “Ray is a really good guy. He brings a lot of spirit to our school and everyone admires him.”

David tells his story. “Two years ago I came to Independence High School with almost no credits and no plan to graduate. I talked with Ray and got into Independence and it only took a week to see that graduation is possible here. I’m happy to know that I am only 12 credits from graduation and I would not be here without Ray’s help and I cannot thank him enough. Ray has repeatedly helped me get through many of my problems and at the last minute; he helped me get into adult Ed. So that I could get enough credits to graduate.”

Taylor adds about Ray, “OK, now I’m an 11th grade student at Independence High School and Ray and this high school changed my life. I used to be a really bad student, getting in trouble; I had a 0.01 GPA when I left my last school. My friends were at Indo and said I had to meet this guy, Ray. I came to Indo one day to meet with Ray. He showed me respect not like any other counselor. Ray is beyond a counselor; he’s a role model and champion. Ray changed my look on life, he showed me that people do love and respect you no matter about the past.”

Ray Scanell has learned the recipe for success with kids. Respect, believing in their potential, creating opportunities for success, and knowing that all kids can graduate from high school. From the stories shared by his students, his recipe could win the Pillsbury \$1,000,000 bake off. Sorry Ray, we don’t have a \$1,000,000 for you today but we have something as good, to declare you as a champion for children for the last 22 years. Congratulations.

Tim Fulton

We often hear of people that just talk the talk, while others walk the walk. Then there is Tim Fulton who walks the walk, walks the skateboard park, cooks the hot dogs and hamburgers, supervises the kids that are enjoying the park, helps to clean up the park, kept the park open on Saturdays by organizing the volunteers needed to make it safe, and all the while, building relationships with the kids that use the park.

Todd Hartman, his nominator said that after the Placerville Skateboard Park was closed an amazing thing happened. He shares, “Starting last summer, Time led his volunteers in opening and closing the park every Saturday from 9AM until dusk. Tim was there every Saturday, overseeing and managing the park. Tim was instrumental in making the park safe for all the kids and young adults. Without, his leadership, the park would probably still be closed. He provided helmets and safety gear for kids who did not have their own. He also made sure there was water and first aid for everyone. He provided many special days were made available for the kids to enjoy at no cost to them or their families.

Carol Martin also commented on Tim’s leadership style. She shares with us what Tim taught her. “I think what Tim taught me once really summarizes well how much he truly understands the art of being a good leader. He used these words from a bible verse, Faith, Hope and Love. He told me to turn them around to: Love, Hope and Faith. He said Love is Listening. Because in the beginning when people are frustrated and feel like they have no options, they just need someone to listen and hear their concerns. Then he told me, you give them Hope, which are really Resources. You find the right

network, the correct tools or paths that will help the person to begin their journey to find resolution to the problem. Then last is Faith, which he shared he with me is patience. He said, it takes time and even though you listen, have given people many resources, and want to sincerely help, you have to have a lot of patience because it takes a lot of time to find true resolution.

He listened to the youth at the park, he identified many resources to help support the park, and he was right about being patient. It took many months to reopen the park, but Tim never gave up, instead he gave more and more. His determination made a difference.

It is obvious that Tim's "walking the walk" kind of dedication to this park and the youth was able to have a distinctive influence on the lives of the skateboarders that continue to enjoy the park today through his love, hope and faith. We are still wondering if he was able to take the time to "skate the skateboard" at the park. Nothing was mentioned about that. Regardless, even if not a champion on a skateboard, he is truly a champion off the skateboard, a Champion for Children. Congratulations, Tim.

