

EXTENDED VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Q&A: What does volunteering mean to you?

Featuring Jorge Sandoval, longtime Child Advocate Volunteer from Houston, TX.

Q: What parts of your own journey help you connect with the children served by the Young Center?

A: At 14, I arrived in the U.S. as an unaccompanied minor—a journey that changed my life forever. Learning a new language and adjusting to a new culture were difficult transitions, but with my family's support and encouragement, I was able to navigate them more smoothly.

Q: How did your involvement with the Young Center begin, and how has it changed you?

A: After many years of adjustment and becoming a permanent resident, I became involved with the Young Center, where I have worked with unaccompanied minors for six years. This experience has been transformative. While advocating for and mentoring unaccompanied minors in shelters, I discovered my passion for teaching. Working with these children has been life-changing; I've had the opportunity to provide guidance, encouragement, and support to youth who were once in the same situation I was.

Q: What do you hope the impact of your work will be?

A: I hope that through my personal experiences and support, these minors will one day have the chance to build the lives they aspire to.

Join us in advocating for these children's best interests. They will be forever grateful to have an ally stand by their side every step of the way.

Q: What drives your continued commitment to this work?

A: While we wait for unaccompanied minors to be reunited with their loved ones, I will continue to show up and advocate for them. Through my work with the Young Center, I will keep offering the guidance, support, and encouragement they need as they navigate this uncertain process. This is what working with immigrant children means to me.

Q: What do you wish more people understood about unaccompanied immigrant children?

A: People need to understand that these children are fleeing extremely dangerous and unsafe conditions. They risk their lives on the journey here in search of safety and a better future. Unaccompanied immigrant children come to the United States hoping for a chance at a normal, secure childhood – a healthier environment filled with opportunity.

Q: What does advocating for the best interests of children mean to you?

A: To me, advocating for the best interests of children means believing that every child deserves a safe and normal childhood – regardless of their immigration status in this country. Every child has the right to experience childhood to the fullest. Unaccompanied immigrant children deserve the chance to live and build their best life here. That is what advocating for their best interests means to me.

Q: What message would you share with someone thinking about volunteering or supporting this work?

A: If anyone is considering becoming a volunteer to support unaccompanied immigrant children, I would say: **DO IT.** Join us in advocating for these children's best interests. Be a supportive, compassionate face they can count on during such an uncertain time. Be the person who shows up for them.

Volunteering and supporting this work can forever change your life, as it did mine.

Learn about volunteering with the Young Center here!