

Letter From a Laurel House Teen

December 2018

“I was 13 years old the first time I entered Laurel House. I was filled with anger, confusion and hurt from things that had happened to me. **My reckless behavior was damaging—I was drinking, using drugs, failing in school, sneaking out late, and dating around.**

My mom left when I was young, and my dad was overwhelmed and couldn't handle me anymore. I lacked proper structure and a healthy family dynamic, and I desperately needed a safe home to get my life back on track.

California Youth Services referred me to Laurel House where I found that safe place. However, after my first 11 months at Laurel House, I was referred to a higher level of care out of state due to my destructive behavior. I needed to make changes, but could not fully grasp how to make those changes.



Natalie (left) at UCI's Teen Entrepreneur Camp this summer.

When I first came to Laurel House, I didn't understand that change needed to take place within me, and that I was responsible for my own actions no matter what happened to me in the past. I was a victim, but couldn't move beyond that.

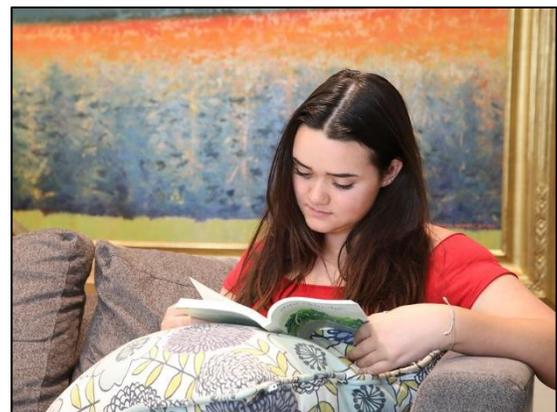
My dad, house parents Donna and Steve, Tara, and my counselor Margie wanted me to change and improve more than I wanted it for myself. I couldn't achieve goals that I did not honestly set for myself.

Once I completed the out of state program, I asked Donna if I could please come back to Laurel House. Donna gave me a second chance at life. **This time, I entered the program with the right mindset, truthful goals and motivation to transform my life.**

I've been at Laurel House 8 months now. Here, I am surrounded by love and support. I have the space to re-evaluate personal goals so I can be successful and fruitful throughout my life. Whereas I used to have all F's in school, I now have all A's AND I'm taking honors classes.

The grace and unconditional love that Donna and Steve pour into me, along with the support from the other staff members, motivates me and keeps me on track. Without their patience and grace, I would not be able to be the happy and successful person I am becoming.

I am forever grateful to Laurel House and all the love they poured into me. Thank you for making this home possible!" – 'Natalie', 2018



Natalie is thriving in an academically enriching environment and has a 4.0 GPA!

'Natalie' is extremely bright, and it is such a joy to watch her succeed. After graduating from high school, Natalie's dream is to attend a four year university—first choice is University of California, Irvine—and then enter the fashion industry. She is currently working towards reuniting with her dad.