



*Thanks to your support, Jasmin, a former foster youth, is now a sophomore at University of Nevada at Las Vegas.*

## Jasmin: From Mentee to Mentor

As she walked into B:E with her grandmother on a crisp fall day of her senior year of high school, Jasmin Lopez remembers thinking, “Why do I have to be here?”

After she heard all the ways B:E could help her achieve her goals, including the chance to earn a \$500 stipend for graduating, Jasmin says, “I thought ‘Wow, this is so good, I can’t just throw this opportunity away.’ It really motivated me to work hard and get good grades so I could go on to college because I saw how they could help me even after I was in college.”

Now 19 and a sophomore with a 3.4 GPA at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, Jasmin says while the educational support B:E provides is extremely valuable, what she most appreciates is that she can talk freely about her feelings. “I am so thankful that I can talk with [B:E Transition Specialist] Isreah because sometimes I don’t want to talk about my personal situation with people at school,” she says. “I want to talk with someone who’ll just listen, and Isreah does that for me.”

The kind of motivation and inspiration Jasmin has received from B:E is exactly what she wants to provide to others in her own career as an elementary school teacher.

“I’ve always had a passion for kids because I connect with them so well,” says Jasmin. “I want to be a teacher who motivates students and makes them become better people. People tell me I’m not going to make any money in education but I want to do something I love, making others happy and motivated to keep learning.”



## YOUR IMPACT

Over 1000 Youth  
Served in 2017

### Education & Careers

**544** youth were supported in their pursuit of education, and/or preparing for and securing employment.



**139** youth participated in B:E's intensive programs.

### Transition Services



**847** youth were supported through **5,514** contacts with transition specialists.

These contacts included crisis intervention, information and referral, connection to resources, and coaching.

### Housing

**78** youth were housed in our community or host housing.



**76%** of those who stayed more than six months were working and/or in school while in housing.

### Life Skills



**251** youth participated in the Alameda County Independent Living Program. B:E began providing these services in July 2016.

## Dear Community,

Happy Spring!

For me, spring is an inspiring time. Blooming flowers and fresh new leaves evoke hope and possibility, a much-needed antidote for these times. Recently I have also been inspired by the fierce leadership of our country's youth.

In these challenging times, we must build bridges by developing relationships – relationships rooted in respect and unwavering curiosity – with those whom we would not otherwise be in conversation with.

At B:E we intentionally engage in coaching and other practices designed to support young people to develop healthy and steadfast relationships with themselves, with their peers and with the larger community. We support connections between people who normally walk in different spheres to begin to break down judgment and to move our youth from invisibility to being seen and heard in their wholeness.

We know that relationships allow us to flourish and bloom. This is reflected in the enclosed stories of Jasmin and Octavis. And as Captain Joyner shares in the story on the following page, “programs and agencies, or even individuals, don’t change things: relationships do.”

Let this spring be a time of renewal and promise for a healthier, more just and humane society.

With gratitude,



Kate Durham  
Executive Director

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# Oakland Police: Building Community



*Officer Kristina Tikkanen (left) and Captain Ersie Joyner (right) sharing the holidays with foster youth.*

A key component of a youth's success in adulthood is having a community that supports and cares for them. However, many youth feel overlooked by society. For foster youth, this sentiment is even more prevalent. And, given the overrepresentation of current and former foster youth in the juvenile and adult justice systems, positive relationships with our local peace officers is critical. This is why B:E's housing program is building bridges with Oakland Police Department (OPD).

B:E provides housing for current and former foster youth through our community housing program in East Oakland. Each youth has his or her own room and receives support from onsite staff. For the last 2 years B:E has worked closely with OPD which has provided gang awareness trainings and other facilitated trainings for youth and B:E staff. OPD Beat Officer Kristina Tikkanen has made a significant impact on B:E's community houses with a watchful eye over our youth and personal commitment to the program. Last year B:E honored her for going above and beyond the call of duty. Veteran OPD Captain

Ersie Joyner has also played a key role. Captain Joyner explains, "It's important that we continue to develop and maintain a partnership with B:E. In my 28 years of law enforcement, I've learned many things but one of the most important is that programs and agencies, or even individuals, don't change things: relationships do."

Oakland Police Department is forging authentic relationships with foster youth and B:E staff – this is the essence of community building. In 2016 OPD "adopted" one of B:E's houses for the holiday season, providing a Christmas tree complete with gifts under it for house members and their children as well as a catered traditional Christmas dinner. This past Christmas OPD turned into Saint Nick once again and delivered holiday gifts to foster youth in all three of B:E's houses. Captain Joyner even dressed up as Santa Claus to spread holiday cheer to the housing clients and their kids.

B:E is grateful for OPD's support and dedication to foster youth, during the holidays and beyond.

# Octavis: From Transitional Housing to College Graduation



*Octavis, a former foster youth will receive his bachelor's degree in May, thanks to your support!*

**A**t 19, Octavis Henry aged out of foster care and knew he had, as he puts it, “a storm coming.”

“I understood that I had to support myself,” says Octavis, now 31. “I knew I was about to go from being in a group home to being homeless. Nobody wants to be homeless.”

Octavis became one of the first participants in B:E’s transitional housing program. “B:E not only provided me housing,” says Octavis, “but also helped me see the need and importance of education.” He had dropped out of high school in order to work to support himself, only to land

what he calls “dead end jobs.” Octavis met with Betty Jo Reuben, B:E’s employment specialist at the time, and gained a new perspective.

“That conversation with Betty Jo got me excited because she instilled a lot of knowledge I did not have,” says Octavis. “That’s what B:E does. It’s family oriented, and they give you little nuggets or recipes for healthy living...I still use those tools, so it’s safe to say my time at B:E contributed to the man I am today.”

In May, Octavis will walk across the stage at Virginia State University, an historically black university, to receive his bachelor’s degree in social work. He plans to work in children and family services, and eventually continue his education. Well known to the B:E community for his stellar singing performances at graduations and other events, Octavis is an accomplished gospel, R&B, and jazz singer.

As he finishes up his coursework in preparation for graduation day, he feels a “deep sense of fulfillment and appreciation.”

B:E volunteer mentor Karl Goldstein began mentoring Octavis when Octavis was 23 and aging out of B:E’s transitional housing program. Karl explains, “Octavis never quits; he just keeps going. I am so proud that he’s graduating this spring. My partner Richard and I are honored to be a presence in his life.”

*“I feel accomplished, and a sense of security. This is a great monument I’m climbing over. Every time I think about it I get a little teary eyed. I will never forget where I came from and will be forever grateful to the dedicated staff of B:E and the people I crossed paths with along my journey who still shape my decisions today.”*

*-Octavis Henry*

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**YES, I’ll help foster youth complete  
high school and college!**

**Give online today: [beyondemancipation.org](http://beyondemancipation.org)**

**Thank you for your support!**