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Alumni Association Newsletter

January 2026

ALUMNI RECOGNITIONS



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Monica has been the driving force behind the launch of the Pivotal Alumni Council, a volunteer led initiative focused on strengthening community and reconnecting Pivotal alumni in meaningful, lasting ways. Her leadership reflects the spirit of the ECHO Award, creating hope, opportunity, and connection that extends far beyond today.

At our first Annual Pivotal Alumni Reunion, Monica shared her belief in the power of community, reminding us that “together, we form constellations that guide those still finding their way.” Through her vision, dedication, and heart, Monica has turned an idea into a growing Alumni Association that will continue to uplift and inspire Pivotal scholars and alumni for years to come.

Alumni Council Introductions

President, Monica Rivera

It's time I step out from behind the shadows and introduce myself.

Greetings, Fellow Alumni. My name is [Monica Rivera](#), and I am honored to serve as the first President of the [PIVOTAL Alumni Association](#).

Where do I start? Where do any of us start? That question alone holds a lot—especially for people who have lived through systems that rarely let us begin on our own terms. So I'll start simply.

I'm someone who has never sought the spotlight. I've always preferred to help others shine. I believe deeply in leading by example, and this is me practicing that—allowing myself to be seen so that this space can feel safer, more human, and more real for everyone who enters it.

I have a strong belief that each of us have the power to not only heal, but to become healers in our own unique and impactful ways too.

My greatest hope for our alumni community is this: that every foster care veteran and alumnus—no matter where you are in your life right now—has access to the grounding, connection, and possibility that healthy relationships and community can make available. I believe each of us carries the capacity not only to heal, but to support healing in one another, in ways that are uniquely our own.

If you are deeply connected already, this community is intentionally being built for you.

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If you are still finding your footing, this community is intentionally being built for you.

If you are thriving, rebuilding, quietly surviving, or unsure whether you even belong here—this community is intentionally being built for you.

Knowing the power, influence, and impact that strong alumni associations, networks, and engagement can have, my dream is for the co-creation of a strong peer-based community that holds and honors our individual and collective growth, wisdom, and experiences.

[Click here to read more of Monica's Introduction letter](#)

MORE TO COME!

Over the next few months, we will be sharing upcoming connections events we are working to develop. We will also be introducing the other Alumni Council Members who have coragesously stepped up to volunteer in working alongside me in the building of our Alumni Community. Keep a look out for ways to get connected and engaged!

[Contact us to have your own Alumni PIVOTAL Moment highlighted here](#)

Successful Holiday Gift Drive 2025



Spread the Love: Community in Action!

This holiday season, Pivotal students experienced moments of joy, care, and belonging through our Alumni-led *Spread the Love* campaign. Simple gifts brought

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We are deeply grateful to our donors and volunteers who gave generously, took time to shop and wrap gifts, and showed up with heart. Thank you to Pivotal for always supporting our students and alumni and for creating a community where care, connection, and hope continue to thrive.

“FOSTERING THE FUTURE” The new Executive Order

Foster♥Greatness "Fostering the Future" in Practice: Centering Lived Experience in the New Executive Order Webinar
Wednesday, January 21, 2026 | 1:00pm PT

This webinar, presented by **Foster Greatness** and **Youth Voices Rising**, creates a platform for these essential perspectives. Join to hear from a panel of individuals with lived experience as they analyze the new executive order “Fostering the Future” and it’s mandate for change within the foster care system. Join to listen, learn, and help shape the discussion on the EO potential promise, and share crucial concerns and insights.

Registration is available here (note: you’ll need to join the Foster Greatness Community to access the event).



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Scholarship Season!!!

[Register to apply to SVCF!](#)

How to Apply:

1. Register or log in to [Apply SVCF](#), our online application system.
2. Complete your Apply SVCF profile to be matched to [SVCF-managed scholarships](#) you may qualify for. Also review our [donor-managed scholarships](#), which typically have separate applications, requirements and deadlines.
3. Upload required application documents (a personal statement, financial need documentation, official school transcripts of grades and letter(s) of recommendation).
4. SVCF scholars who are eligible for renewal or deferred scholarship awards in 2026-2027 do not need to reapply. You will receive notifications on how to claim your scholarship award.

Application deadline for most scholarships is February 27, 2026 by 12:00pm (noon) PST. All applicants will be notified of their results of their application by June 30, 2026.

APPLY TO ADDITIONAL ADOPTED/FOSTER CHILD/ORPHAN SCHOLARSHIPS HERE!!!

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Other Helpful Resources



Free Long-Term Therapy with a Home Within

(available in 25 states)

New Year, new you? Are you looking at working on your mental health this year?

A Home Within is a nationwide volunteer network of licensed mental health professionals offering **FREE, non-age restricted, open-ended, and individualized** psychotherapy and mental health services to current foster youth and foster alumni across the country. Click below to get started with therapy that's no-cost, reliable, trauma-responsive, and long-term for how ever long you need it.

Get Started TODAY!



First Star Alumni Connect and Collect Resource Pop-Up: Networking New Beginnings

Come Join First Star's Networking New Beginnings, a virtual event all about making connections and discovering resources to help you grow personally and professionally. You'll also learn tips for using LinkedIn to showcase your skills and expand your network.

Event Date: Tuesday, January 27, 2026 | 3:30pm PST/ 5:30pm CST/ 6:30pm EST

Event Location: via Zoom

RSVP HERE

Foster ❤️ Greatness Thrive Pathways Program

Don't miss your chance to join **Thrivers Pathways**, Foster Greatness' career readiness workshop series with **Str8Up Employment Services and Staffmark Group!**

This is a dedicaed space for former & current foster youth (18+) to gain real-world skills and support needed to launch or chang careers. Over five virtual sessions you'll cover everything from acing interviews to knowing your workplace

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February 18th | March 4th | March 18th | and March 25th.

Plus, complete all program requirements & session and **earn a \$100 career readiness stipend**



Registration closes, January 25, 2026

SIGN UP HERE



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION COUNCIL CONTACTS

Alumni Council President: Monica Rivera

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Alumni Council Vice President: Sam Hernandez

San Jose State University | Class of 2016

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Save Our New General Inquiry Alumni email address:

alumni.association@pivotalnow.org

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PIVOTAL Moments don't end at graduation; success begets success and rippling waves of inspiration. We ALL want to see you shine and join you in celebrating your major life milestones and accomplishments!

Have your **PIVOTAL Alumni Moment** highlighted in an upcoming newsletter.

Alumni PIVOTAL Moments are *ONLY* shared with Alumni's permission and story approval.

Contact us to have your own Alumni PIVOTAL Moment highlighted here

Follow the Pivotal Alumni Association



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