

Investing in the Future of Education

Dr. Jan Gilman Creates A SRJC Scholarship For Foster Children



“When my aunt and uncle died, they left the Leanore and Howard Klein Foundation they founded in the hands of a board of directors that included my cousin and me. Each of us has special interests. Part of my focus is on working with kids with particular needs,” said Jan Levinson Gilman, Ph.D., a child and adolescent psychologist with a practice in Santa Rosa specializing in family issues, including adoption, foster care adoption, and fostering issues.

Dr. Gilman is also the author of a children’s book titled *Murphy Street Homes* about a puppy that thinks there is something inherently bad about him because he continues to be shipped from home to home, a metaphor for the emotional state of mind experienced by many foster youth.

With a financial commitment from the Klein Foundation, Dr. Gilman established a scholarship program at SRJC in 2009 for emancipated foster young adults interested in pursuing a vocational education program. “A major problem associated with foster children is that, as they age, they often do not have the skills needed to graduate from high school or college, as well as the basic knowledge required to manage their lives,” she said.

She approached the Santa Rosa Junior College Foundation with the goal of creating a two year program that would provide an annual contribution of \$6,500 for a selected student. Dr. Gilman developed the criteria and the SRJC Scholarship office, with the assistance of the VOICES Youth Center of Santa Rosa, identified appropriate candidates. VOICES is a nonprofit organization dedicated to guiding foster youth on their road to independence by bringing a wide range of resources they need together at one location.

Dr. Gilman’s concern for young people in foster care, without natural parents, has resulted in a close relationship with other support groups, such as Fostering Connections, a nonprofit organization affiliated with TLC Consulting Services headed by Director Cori Herzig. Fostering Connections offers pro bono therapy and counseling services provided by licensed clinicians to foster children through various social service agencies. The Klein Foundation also provides funding for nature education programs at the 500-acre David Bouverie Preserve of the Audubon Canyon Ranch, as well as grants for a number of other worthy causes.

“More than 50 percent of foster children can become homeless at some point in their lives because of the lack of basic coping mechanisms needed to succeed. I’ve worked with various adoption programs for years to help young people who have been traumatized by family life events, lack of consistency in their lives, and without the ability to earn a living or get the help that they deserve. I have a soft spot in my heart for all of these kids. Changing lives through education is what this scholarship program is all about,” Dr. Gilman said.