

BRIGHT FUTURES NEWS



BRIGHT FUTURES JOINS NATIONAL AOA PEER LEARNING COMMUNITY IN NEW ORLEANS

From January 12-15, Bright Futures joined partners in New Orleans for the inaugural Advancing Opportunities for Adolescents (AOA) Peer Learning Community, hosted by The Wallace Foundation. The gathering brought together seven-cross sector partnerships across the country selected for the AOA cohort, creating a space to build relationships among the community teams, technical assistance partners, and Wallace – along with time to enjoy local jazz and art by New Orleans young artists.

We were proud to be joined by Jackie Cruz, Executive Director at Hartnell College Foundation; District 3 Supervisor Chris Lopez; Elsa Mendoza Jimenez, Director of Health Services for Monterey County; Yvette Padilla, Family and Community Engagement Coordinator for North Monterey County Unified School District;

and Joseph Dyles, School Resource Officer at Greenfield High School. Together, our delegation engaged in sessions introducing the initiative's six core youth development principles and exploring practical approaches for planning and strengthening local out-of-school-time (OST) systems.

One session focused on collaborative strategies for building inclusive youth development ecosystems, highlighting how communities can identify local assets, use opportunity landscaping, and better support middle school and early high school youth who are furthest from opportunity. Another session emphasized the importance of a shared vision and clear communication, with practical guidance on how communities can talk about their work locally and beyond, followed

by a Q&A with experienced OST leaders from prior Wallace Foundation initiatives.

The convening marked an important starting point for the AOA initiative, reinforcing the value of collaboration, shared language, and strategic alignment as we begin this work.



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2026 February Newsletter

BRIGHT SPOT CELEBRATION AT ONE MAIN STREET

On February 6, Bright Futures Monterey County proudly brought together educators, community partners and supporters from across the county for the Bright Spot Celebration and Strategic Plan Reveal at One Main Street in Salinas. The afternoon was a powerful reminder of what is possible when our community aligns around a shared vision for children and youth.

During the event, we honored Monterey County Bright Spots: schools, districts, and partners that are demonstrating exceptional results by exceeding county averages, showing meaningful growth over time, and sustaining progress. These Bright Spots reflect not only strong outcomes, but also the dedication, collaboration, and innovation happening every day across our

cradle-to-career system in Monterey County.

Bright Futures also released its 2025–2030 Strategic Plan. Shaped through an inclusive, data-driven, and community-centered process, the plan reflects months of listening, analysis, and collaboration across sectors. It reaffirms our North Star of ensuring every child in Monterey County is prepared for school, succeeds in and out of school, completes postsecondary education or training, and enters a pathway to economic mobility.

Ultimately, the Bright Spot Celebration was not only a moment to reflect on progress, but a call to continue moving forward together, building on what works, closing equity gaps, and advancing opportunity for all.



**THANK YOU TO OUR
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Monterey County continues to make strong progress in connecting students and families to CalkIDS accounts. January numbers show yet another increase, reflecting the ongoing commitment of our schools and community partners throughout the school year.

To date, **19,569** student CalkIDS accounts have been claimed, representing **30%** of eligible Monterey County students, with **\$11.2 million** secured for local students. When including both students and newborns, **21,196 total** CalkIDS accounts have been claimed, representing **26%** of all eligible students and newborns countywide and **\$11.3 million**.

www.calkids.org



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