



IMPACT!

newsletter



February
2020

How your investment is changing the future for individuals and leading the way to life in recovery!



Step Up All-Staff Retreat - January 9, 2020

IN MEMORIAM



Step Up joins the world in mourning the loss of Kobe Bryant, his daughter Gianna, and seven others who perished in a helicopter crash in Calabasas on January 26, 2020.

Our hearts are heavy for his parents and sisters, his wife Vanessa and his other three daughters. Kobe was a champion on and off the court; and he was a champion to end youth homelessness. Along with his wife Vanessa, they were great supporters of Step Up. Kobe and Vanessa Bryant Family Foundation provided funding to sponsor the eight TAY units at Step Up on Vine (pictured: Kobe Bryant with Step Up President & CEO Tod Lipka and President Clinton).

You may honor Kobe's legacy by making a donation in his name at www.stepuponsecond.org.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



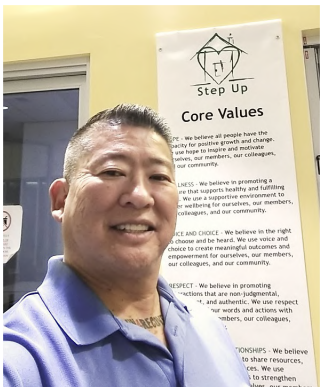
Diana Nyad (pictured) is known as a champion long-distance swimmer. At 30, she tried - and failed - to swim from Cuba to Key West. On her fifth attempt, she succeeded. She was

64. Nyad shared her personal tale of grit and determination with 246 Step Up employees as the keynote speaker for the agency's staff retreat on January 9.

She shared with the staff that her "brilliant younger brother," affectionately known by his peers as "The Pied Piper," lived and died on the streets of Boston. Like many of Step Up's members, Shariff had a mental health diagnosis.

Step Up staff connected with Nyad's brother's story and were inspired by her personal story of triumph in completing the 110-mile swim between Cuba and Key West, without a shark cage and living through the stings of jellyfish during the 53-hour trek. Thank you, Diana Nyad, for sharing your time with us!

A SENSE OF BELONGING



In first grade, Norman "Fuji" Fujimoto (pictured) looked around and noticed no one else looked like him. He felt uncomfortable in his own skin, so he started using alcohol and marijuana at 14 and joined a gang at 16. When offered heroin, Fuji felt compelled to say yes and his life took a dramatic turn for the worse. He committed crimes to support his habit, and in 1995, he was deemed a menace to society and received a 29 years to life prison sentence.

In prison, dying became more desirable than living. Fuji's failed suicide attempt placed him in a mental health program, where he decided to honor his late-mother's only wish - that he quit drugs. "Being able to take responsibility for my actions gave me a sense of freedom and happiness I

never had before," said Fuji. He decided to dedicate his life to the service of others.

With support from L.A. County's Public Defender, Fuji was released early from prison. He received his high school diploma at age 47 and is certified as an alcohol & drug counselor and anger management facilitator. He works at Step Up as a Substance Abuse Specialist Service Coordinator. "We call Fuji the "client whisperer," says Emily James, Step Up VP of Programs, L.A. Region - East. "He builds rapport and relationships with a wide variety of people, successfully linking many of our members with treatment and recovery services."

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