

# BRIGHT FUTURES NEWS



Pictured left to right: Tony Amezcua, Michael Applegate, Sonja Koehler, Lauren Cole, Claudia Gomez, Dr. Rebeca Andrade, Iris Gamez

## CREATING PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

### Monterey County Visible and Equipped

Bright Futures had the opportunity to attend StriveTogether's National Conference in Salt Lake City on September 25-27, 2024. This event brought together Cradle to Career Networks from across the country, all united in pursuit of a common goal: creating a future where every child has the opportunity to succeed. The focus was on transforming systems to achieve more equitable outcomes for Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian, and children living in poverty.

The conference emphasized community expertise, data, and collaborative learning. Bright Futures sent the biggest team ever of seven to the conference this year. Backbone members joined, as well as one Steering Partners. The group had representation from Salinas City Elementary School District, Door to Hope, Bright Beginnings, and Bright Futures. "We gained valuable insights that we're eager to apply

within our community in Monterey County, working towards better outcomes for all," said Director of Bright Futures Monterey, Tony Amezcua. The next StriveTogether National Conference will be in September 2025 in Atlanta, Georgia. This event is open to the public for registration, and thus Cradle to Career partners and supporters could join the team next year.





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## 2024 October Newsletter

### SPOTLIGHT



**Sonja Koehler**

**Director, Bright Beginnings Early Childhood Development Initiative**

One of Bright Future's steering partners is Sonja Koehler, director of Bright Beginnings.

In 2016, Koehler joined the first joint project between the Children's Council and the Early Childhood Development Initiative, co-designing [MontereyCountyChildCare.org](http://MontereyCountyChildCare.org).

In 2018, she joined Bright Beginnings as Director, and hence became part of the blended backbone of the cradle-to-career partnership.

"The shared vision of the Initiatives' leadership was to be stronger, together," she said. "They knew then - and I still believe today - that for young people to succeed in life and school, we need to get it right at every stage of growth and learning - and especially with a strong start."

### WELCOME TO THE TEAM!



**Dulce Silva**

**Associate Project Manager of Bright Futures Educational Partnership Hartnell College Foundation**

### JOIN US!



Bright Futures will be guiding you to sign up your child for free college accounts! In partnership with Hartnell College Foundation K-12 STEAM programs!

**Information. Fun. Refreshments. Robots.**

**October 17, 2024**

**5:00 PM – 7:00 PM**

**Salinas Regional Soccer Complex**

**1440 Constitution Blvd.**

**Salinas, CA 93905**

### MC GIVES STARTS IN NOVEMBER

Bright Futures is proud to participate in the Monterey County Gives Campaign for the first time. The biggest nonprofit fundraising campaign is held from Nov. 14 - Dec.31, 2024. The big idea: "CalKIDS leverages our role as a diverse community partnership in Monterey County, focused on closing equity gaps and boosting educational outcomes." The efforts aim to steer every child towards economic mobility.

Introduced by the State of California in 2022, CalKIDS is an initiative to help children save for their future education. In Monterey County alone, \$36 million has been awarded to 71,000 children. The program provides newborns and eligible low-income children with

an initial deposit and encourages a foundation for their future college and career savings.

Awareness of this opportunity remains low. As of April 2024, only 7% of eligible families had enrolled. Since Bright Futures began its advocacy for CalKIDS earlier this year, enrollment has increased by 4%. Consequently, Monterey County has now claimed a total of 7,946 accounts, providing over \$4 million to youth.

Bright Futures' mission is to ensure that every child is not only prepared for school but also thrives academically and socially throughout their education, completes a post-high school credential, and enters a promising career. Bright Future's goal is to continue to work with partners and schools to increase the number of children enrolled in CalKIDS.



### Contact Us

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