

A Step Beyond Names James Wright as New Executive Director

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Escondido, California - The Board of Directors of *A Step Beyond (ASB)* announced today that James K. Wright will be joining the Creative Youth Development non-profit organization on July 13 as its new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Executive Director, following the retirement of current CEO and Executive Director Frank Foster, according to Board Chair Steve Gosselin.

“After months of going through an extensive recruitment and interviewing process, our Board identified James as an exceptional fit for *A Step Beyond*,” Gosselin said. “As our new CEO and Executive Director, James will bring his extensive experience of helping underserved youth in San Diego take hold of their dreams for college and a career.”

Wright has served as CEO of San Diego’s Classroom of the Future Foundation (CFF) since December of 2015. At the non-profit organization, he restored fiscal sustainability, developed a diversified fundraising model, and built a five-year strategic plan for their model college and career readiness program for K-12 grade students.

Prior to joining Classroom of the Future, Wright served as Director of Development and Marketing for Feeding San Diego (FSD). He joined FSD in August of 2011. FSD is one of San Diego’s leading hunger-relief organizations providing nutritious meals for those in need.

Wright explained his reason for accepting the offer to come to *ASB*. “*ASB* is an amazing organization,” he said, “because it provides young people with the vision and skills they need to succeed. The ongoing arts, educational and social service programs, and individualized mentoring, that *ASB* provides, are exactly what young people need, and I know of no other organization that provides all of these services as well as *ASB* does,” he added. “On top of that, *ASB* commits to working with and helping these kids for ten years, until they get their high school diploma!”

Wright believes that *ASB*’s mission and programs are more critical than ever before, with many families impacted by increased hardships caused by the pandemic and the likely cuts to public education this Fall.

Wright has a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from George Washington University in Washington D.C., where he graduated cum laude in 2009 following studying abroad in Barcelona, Spain for six months. He received his Master of Arts in Nonprofit Leadership and Management from the University of San Diego (USD) in 2014 and is a certified Six Sigma Green Belt through USD.

A Step Beyond was formed in 2014 as a vision of Frank and Jan Foster, and a group of community leaders, who made a commitment to establishing the non-profit organization to help underserved youth following his retirement as CEO of Fieldstone Homes. Since its inception, Foster has served as the organization's CEO and Executive Director, because he wanted to help young people learn to fulfill their dreams and succeed in a career. As he leaves *ASB*, he will complete his second career retirement. He, along with his wife, Jan, will remain on *ASB*'s Board of Directors.

"I am absolutely thrilled that James will be helping bring *A Step Beyond* to the next level of serving our kids, their families, and this community," Foster said. "He has a passion for helping the underserved in our community, and his experience in education, fundraising, and leading teams will serve *A Step Beyond* well."

Based at the California Center for the Arts in Escondido, *ASB* brings in third-grade students from Escondido and San Marcos and commits to mentoring them through graduating high school and pursuing college or a career. In almost every case, *ASB* students will be the first in their families to attend college. *ASB* uses dance as the mechanism for recruiting their students. "Teaching dance enhances our students' cognitive skills and helps them focus on the arts and music," Foster said. "Usually these types of programs are the first to be cut in public schools when budgets are reduced. Our program picks up for that."

Once students are recruited to *ASB*, they also receive extensive academic support including hands on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) opportunities in *ASB*'s MakerSpace lab and college preparatory assistance. They also have access to certified social service counselors who work with students individually or in groups, as well as with students' families.

Wright lives in Vista with his wife, Samantha, and their two children, Fox and Indy.

In his spare time, James teaches tennis and golf for Southern California Special Olympics and serves on the Board of Directors of Resounding Joy, a non-profit that provides music therapy to children, seniors, veterans and individuals facing hardships. He also is a volunteer grant writer for Pilgrim United Church of Christ in Carlsbad.

For more information on *A Step Beyond*, visit its website at www.A-Step-Beyond.org.

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