



True tales of Masonic support in California

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Understanding Catherine

At MCYAF, a Masonic daughter discovers a pathway to hope

At age 14, Catherine's* life had already been shaped by loss. Two years earlier, her father, a California Mason, was in a traumatic accident. He died of complications, leaving Catherine and her mother to sort through their grief and piece together a life without him.

Catherine's mother, Margaret, suffers from diabetes and has limited resources to care for herself and her daughter. Catherine coped as best she could. She stayed close to home, watching the ups and downs of her mother's health with concern. She tried to keep her emotions to herself, but sometimes erupted in furious outbursts. She suffered debilitating abdominal pains without any physical cause. She was in trouble at school: She'd always had to study hard to get by, and now, feeling distracted and ill, the workload seemed impossible. She began staying home, missing more and more days of class. By the middle of eighth grade, she was in jeopardy of failing middle school altogether.

That's when her mother finally called the Masonic Center for Youth and Families (MCYAF). It wasn't the first place Margaret had tried to get help for her daughter. But so far, no one had offered any real answers. Exhausted financially, physically, and emotionally, she hoped that MCYAF would be different.

It was. A caring, compassionate team of psychologists met with mother and daughter, both together and separately. They guided Catherine through important tests to rule out learning and behavioral disorders. They took the time to understand the complete, complex picture of her grief and anxiety; her depression and fear of abandonment. They helped Catherine understand it, too. They showed her that she could work through her anxieties. They suggested ways to ease her fear of being alone and build up her confidence to venture into the world. They got in touch with her school and recommended special accommodations. They also met with Margaret privately to support her in her new role as a single mother.

Because of MCYAF, Catherine's life has taken a new shape. Her school attendance is improving. She recently found the courage to attend a sleep-away camp for teens interested in horses, and has started to take riding lessons. She and her mother have learned new ways to support each other as they move forward from their grief. With the help of their fraternal family, they have found a path away from loss, and towards hope.

**Names and identifying details have been changed to protect client privacy.*

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