



**Unity Care Group, Inc.**  
"Creating Healthier Communities"

### Media Contact

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Foster Youth Beat the Odds by Graduating from High School

**Auburn, Calif., (June 18, 2010)** - Unity Care's Independent Living Program (ILP) is proud to celebrate twenty-eight (28) foster youth high school graduates at their second annual ILP Graduation Picnic set for Saturday, June 19, 2010.

Did you know that in California youth must leave foster care at the age of 18 or upon their high school graduation, whichever comes first? For many foster youth, maintaining academic excellence is difficult to achieve because of the heavy emotional and mental burdens they carry stemming from years of abuse and neglect. According to national and local statistics, less than 50 percent of foster youth will graduate from high school.

However, through state and county funded programs like Unity Care's ILP, foster youth do have additional supports to help them transition to adulthood. This year, ILP has successfully assisted twenty-eight (28) youth to graduate from eight high schools in the County, including Rocklin, Whitney, Oakmont, Roseville, Granite Bay, Placer, Chana, Adelante and Woodcreek. ILP currently serves over 150 of Placer County's current/former foster youth ages 16-21, who are either preparing to exit foster care or already aged-out of care. ILP's function is to teach young people the skills they need to become self-sufficient, by hosting educational workshops and providing individualized services.

Ashley, an ILP participant and a recent graduate from Rocklin High School, has overcome many obstacles in her young life. As a child, she grew up in a constant state of homelessness because her parents battled drug addiction. At age 13, she was placed in foster care and lived in several foster homes until her CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) became her guardian. Because of her difficult childhood, Ashley did not receive a consistent education, which resulted in a deficit in high school units.

When Ashley was referred to Unity Care's ILP, she met her mentor Tami Brodnik, ILP Program Manager. Tami quickly took Ashley under her wing and provided her guidance to graduate on time with her peers. Ashley's self-motivation to succeed allowed her to graduate with a 3.36 G.P.A. Tami also helped Ashley apply for college, introduced her to the California Youth Connection where she has taken on a leadership position. In addition to guidance and workshops, ILP has assisted Ashley with daily needs such as bus passes and connected her with various community resources. Today, Ashley is enrolled at Sierra Community College and this fall she plans to live in the dorms on her own. She has applied for scholarships and is working part-time. Ashley has also started to reconnect with her parents, who are now clean and sober.

Tami said, "All of our foster youth graduates have beaten the odds and we are truly proud of their accomplishments. This is a major stepping stone toward independence and a brighter future. We are honored to be a part of major turning points in their young lives. ILP, Placer County Children's System of Care and our community partners are here to help them through the often difficult transition to adulthood."

Over 100 ILP participants and their families are expected to attend the picnic. Graduates will be presented with awards, as well as enjoy food and "minute to win it games". Elected Officials and community partners are invited to join in the celebration. The event will be hosted at Auburn Recreational Park located at 123 Recreation Drive in Auburn from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.. For more information, please contact Tami Brodnik, Program Manager at (530) 886-5473.

### **About Unity Care**

Founded in 1992, Unity Care Group, Inc. is a community-based, multi-service youth and family development nonprofit agency. Founded with the goal of developing educational and social programs to enrich the lives of at-risk youth, our mission is to provide quality youth and family programs for the purpose of creating healthier communities through life-long partnerships. For more information contact Linda Vu, Communications and Development Specialist, at (408) 510-3480, or via email at [lvu@unitycare.org](mailto:lvu@unitycare.org).

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