

RESORT REPORTER

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CAST AND COMMUNITY UNITE THROUGH INSPIRING CONNECTIONS



DISNEY LEADER AND MENTOR PRINCETON PARKER REUNITES WITH NEW CAST MEMBER CINDY NGUYEN IN FRONTIERLAND.

Disneyland Resort commits an additional \$1 million toward its workforce development initiative, bringing the total to \$5 million for Anaheim nonprofits

By Dani Decena

How does one define success? Is it found in a fulfilling career, a major of study, a particular achievement? Food and beverage cast member Cindy Nguyen learned how to define her own meaning of success and found clarity during a point of confusion in her life, all thanks to the collaboration between Orange County United Way and the Disneyland Resort, and the help of an outstanding motivational speaker and Disney leader, Princeton Parker. This community workforce development initiative has served

thousands of individuals within the Anaheim area, and this is one of those stories that demonstrates the power and possibility of what can happen through connection.

With a passion for developing youth, Orange County United Way collaborates with schools in the Anaheim Union High School District in addition to companies like the Disneyland Resort to expose students to career possibilities and opportunities.

"One of the exciting parts of this relationship we have with the Disneyland Resort is that we're targeting schools within the Anaheim area to give them equity, career awareness and life skills they need," shares Sergio Contreras,

executive director, United for Student Success at Orange County United Way and former Disneyland Resort cast member. "Through the collaboration, Disneyland Resort provides the funding to offer workshops for our students to hear firsthand from cast members who look like them and sound like them to learn about everything from leadership development, to resume building, to interview skills ... all those soft skills that they would most likely not learn in school that they're going to need."

While support of Orange County United Way's Youth Career Connections program began in 2017, it grew in 2021, allowing United Way to expand its reach to 10 high schools within the district.

Even in the midst of the pandemic, United Way officials were motivated to create virtual experiences to continue their mission. Cindy was one such student who was deeply impacted by these virtual leadership development opportunities as a junior at Magnolia High School.

Growing up, Cindy had a natural gift for excelling in school, but she found that she placed undue pressure on herself to meet others' expectations. Before taking these classes, she felt lost and confused as to where she wanted to attend college and what career path to choose. After participating in United Way's program with Disneyland Resort, she felt the courage to embrace her path of study-

+ STORY CONTINUED ON P.4

DISNEY CAST LIFE

Aspiring Stories: First-Generation Graduate Captures New Photography Role at Disneyland Resort

By Krystal Rhaburn

Theodore "Teddo" Corbin's lifelong passion for photography has served him well as a Disney PhotoPass photographer ever since he was hired at the Disneyland Resort 10 years ago. However, the bachelor's degree he earned last year in digital photography through the Disney Aspire program recently propelled him into the role he'd been dreaming of: photographer for the Disneyland Resort special events team.

"I've been trying to get involved with special events my entire Disney career," Teddo shared. "I was so grateful for the opportunity to interview for the role, and truly feel that the new doors that are opening for me as a recent graduate are incredible."

Although Teddo did not initially intend to pursue further higher education upon completion of an associate degree in 2015, he decided to go back to school the year before the Disney Aspire

program began. After facing high out-of-state tuition fees at institutions around the country, he was grateful for the 2018 launch of Disney Aspire, which pays full tuition up-front and reimburses fees for eligible hourly cast. He received his degree from Southern New Hampshire University last November, making him the first person in his family to obtain a bachelor's degree.

"The academic program itself made me feel super nervous, as I'd never done online classes before," he said. "But the Guild, [Disney] Aspire and Southern New Hampshire teams were really dedicated to making sure that I was on track and doing the best that I could."

Teddo finds being a first-generation graduate an immense honor and, along with a new body of work through a varied portfolio and new role, he now has a triumph he can take with him throughout his career.

"I never in my entire life thought I would have a bachelor's and be a first-generation graduate," Teddo shared. "Because of Aspire, I'm able to hold my head up a little bit higher than I ever have before."



TEDDO PROUDLY DISPLAYS HIS DEGREE FROM SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE UNIVERSITY.

COMMUNITY

Disneyland Resort and Make-A-Wish Fulfill First Official In-Park Wishes Since Reopening

By Krystal Rhaburn

This World Wish Day on April 29, we announced that the Disneyland Resort Wish Program is returning after a two-year hiatus! Since the very first official wish was granted at Disneyland Resort in 1980, Disney and Make-A-Wish have worked together to make more than 145,000 wishes come true globally. Here at Disneyland Resort, we work with Make-A-Wish and other approved wish-granting organizations to make extra special magic for children with critical illnesses.

The program's return kicked off at the first-ever Disney Junior Fun Fest, welcoming the very first guests on official wish visits in the parks in over two years: Noah, Levi, Kemuel and their families.

"Seeing the wish kids back here in the park with their blue shirts and big smiles means everything," shared Kim Chips, manager of Disneyland Resort Corporate Citizenship. "We've been fulfilling wishes in collaboration with Make-A-Wish and dozens of other wish-granting organizations for over 40 years, and it's such a special moment when they walk into the park for the first time and our cast members bring that magical experience to life for them."

While not all wishes can be granted immediately, Disneyland Resort and Make-A-Wish anticipate gradually ramping up wish-granting efforts in the future.

Wish kids Noah, Levi and Kemuel all shared the same wish: to visit the 'Happiest Place on Earth'. Their fun-filled weekend kicked off as guests of honor in the Disney Junior Fun Fest parade, where they rode in style across Disney California Adventure park in a customized Make-A-Wish omnibus, accompanied



WISH FAMILIES ENJOY THEIR SPECIAL VISIT TO DISNEY CALIFORNIA ADVENTURE PARK!

by an array of beloved Disney characters including the Sensational Six, Chip 'n' Dale, Doc McStuffins, Vampirina and Fancy Nancy.

Following the parade, Noah, Levi, Kemuel and their families were guests of honor at the Disney Junior Fun Fest presentation, hosted by Disneyland Resort Ambassador Mark Everett King Jr., which culminated in a warm welcome of the three wish families.

"The past two years have been very challenging for everyone, wish granters included," Mark said. "While we have discovered some fun, interesting, and inno-

vative ways to continue to grant wishes, nothing compares to the experience of [seeing wish families] living [their] wish inside of a Disney Park ... which is why, on this World Wish Day, we were so excited to welcome three inspiring wish families here to our parks."

The fun didn't stop there! After singing and dancing along to some live entertainment, the three families quickly scoped out the rest of their weekend at the resort and began enjoying food, attractions, Disney Junior Fun Fest activities and more with the help of some wonderful cast members.

Q&A With World Wish Day Kids

The Disney TV show Noah would choose to star in: "Bunk'd, because I would make s'mores at Camp Kikiwaka."

Kemuel's favorite Disney movie character: "R2-D2 from Star Wars! I can't wait to see him."

Disneyland Resort attraction that excites Levi the most: "Incredicoaster! It doesn't look scary at all, and I like how fast it goes!"

DISNEY CAST LIFE

Disneyland Resort Cast Members Share Stories of Autism Awareness & Acceptance

By Sasha Azoqa

An interaction with a fellow cast member helped Disneyland Resort Entertainment cast member Walker Williams open up to his leaders about his challenges with autism, and it's made all the difference in his feelings of acceptance at work.

"She recognized that I was seeking help, but didn't know how to ask," said Walker, who has Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism. "In that moment I felt vulnerable, and I allowed my walls to come down."

"With Asperger's, I like to keep a lot of things to myself, and I bottle up a lot," said Walker. He used to feel shame about having autism, but that changed once he confided in his leaders.

"If it wasn't for my management team, I wouldn't be where I am today. I still would have been isolated, always bottling up inside," said Walker. "I have my stuttering and OCD, but my managers understand. It's nice to be able to be vulnerable and open, and that has really helped me become a better cast member."

Food and beverage cast member Casey Black has a son with autism, and he uses his knowledge to educate and share resources with fellow cast.

"I ask my cast what they would do if

my son came up to them," said Casey. "I tell them, he's a runner, so as soon as he sees something he likes, he's going to run off. I ask them what they would do in that moment, and who they would call [for help]."

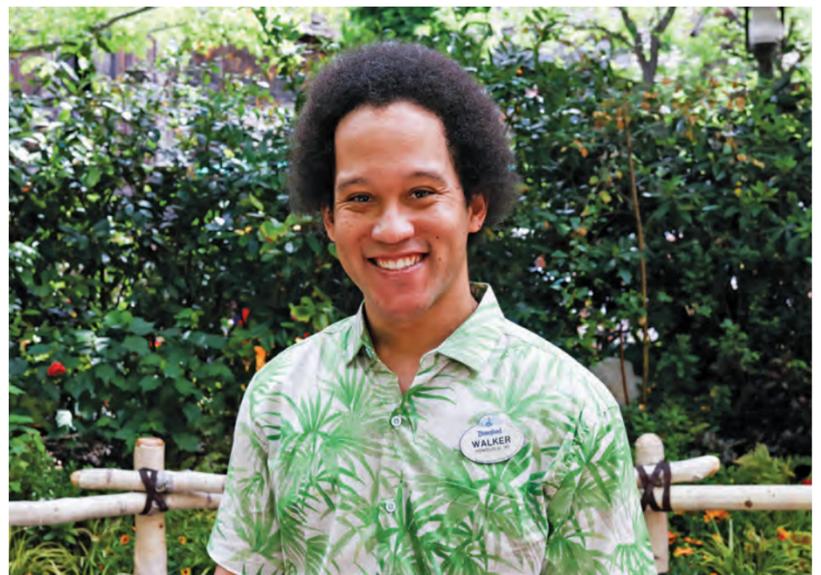
Casey said it's important to have honest conversations with cast in a safe space. "It's OK not to know what to do," Casey said understanding is the key to acceptance. "When you see that little moment with guests when there is panic or yelling, don't assume that they're a bad parent and can't control their children. Maybe someone's day is not going well, so it's about being able to go up to them and have confidence that you know what tools are available to help them so they can have a good day."

Attractions cast member Rene Guerrero has a daughter with autism, and like Casey, uses her knowledge and experience to better assist her guests.

"It's really about having a lot of patience," said Rene. "When a child is having a meltdown or tantrum, they're not acting out, they're just trying to find a way to communicate with you." Rene added, "you have to look at the situation in a different way and try to help."

Walker, Casey and Rene share a few ways to be more inclusive around guests and cast with autism:

BE OPEN MINDED. "The biggest thing,



WALKER WILLIAMS, ENTERTAINMENT CAST MEMBER

in my opinion, is to be kind and have an open heart," said Walker.

KNOW WHAT YOUR AREA HAS TO OFFER. "Maybe you have a quiet space in your area," said Casey. "Or a space with bright lights that provide a distraction and a sense of focus for children with autism." Rene added, "I always recommend directing guests [with children] to Child Care Centers because they are quiet and cool."

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS. "When you ask more questions, you have a better understanding of what the other person is going through," said Walker. "That's where the learning takes place."

Walker said autism acceptance is about "looking at the individual as a person, not as a disability. We all have our own struggles and the beautiful part about life is that it's a team effort and no one is better than another."



CASEY BLACK, FOOD AND BEVERAGE MANAGER, WITH HIS FAMILY



RENE GUERRERO, ATTRACTIONS CAST MEMBER

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Disneyland Park Cast Member Celebrates Family Legacies at Veterans Event

By Kristen Lewis

Fantasyland Retail Stage Manager Megan Matsumoto is Japanese-American and the granddaughter of a World War II veteran, so she's doubly honored this month to celebrate both Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month and Military Appreciation Month.

"It's important that [AANHPI] and military heritage are highlighted here at the resort because there are so many cast members that have a connection to either heritage or both," said Megan. "It makes me so happy to be part of this Disney family."

On Tuesday, May 24, two Business

Employee Resource Groups (BERGs), COMPASS (Community of Pacific Islanders, Asians and Allies) and SALUTE, representing cast member support for the armed forces, joined together to host a panel and Flag Retreat Ceremony. The event honored two World War II Japanese-American veterans.

At the event, the two men shared stories about their service and what it meant to be Japanese-American veterans. "[I] had a lot to prove that [Japanese-Americans] were Americans," Mr. Nakamura said about why he enlisted. After the flag retreat, the men met with cast members and were presented with commemorative plaques in honor of their service.

Megan said her grandfather, who

passed away in 2013, also was proud to have served in the 442nd Infantry of the U.S. Army, a regiment almost entirely composed of Japanese-American soldiers. "He always talked about how it was one of the best things he ever did because it helped Japanese-Americans [gain acceptance] as Americans," she said.

Megan's grandfather was awarded the Purple Heart for injuries suffered during his service. "My grandpa is my greatest hero," she said. "He was proud of being both Japanese and American, and that passed on to me. It shaped my identity and made me want to ensure his service is not forgotten and his legacy continues."



MEGAN HONORS HER LATE GRANDFATHER PAUL KAZUO MATSUMOTO AT DISNEYLAND PARK'S FLAG RETREAT CEREMONY.



MEGAN MATSUMOTO SHARES HER GRANDFATHER'S STORY TO WWII VETERANS YOSHIO "YOSH" NAKAMURA (SECOND FROM LEFT) AND DON MIYADA (THIRD FROM LEFT) ALONGSIDE PHOTOGRAPHER SHANE SATO (FAR LEFT), AND EMMY AWARD-WINNING JOURNALIST, KABC'S DAVID ONO (FAR RIGHT).

MOCHI

AANHPI Heritage Month is a multi-layered celebration for Megan and her family, too, since her heritage comprises traditions from Japanese, American and Hawaiian cultures. Her favorite Japanese tradition is making mochi for the New Year with her family, something she learned from her grandmother. "My Japanese heritage makes me feel like I am more than just one story."

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Disney Cast Member Redefines Career Expectations While Embracing Heritage

By Brandon Killman

During the month of May, we are celebrating the diverse and intersectional Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities and their many contributions to United States history and culture. Our Disney cast members' contributions are an important part of our celebration.

As a Filipino-American cast member at the Disneyland Resort, Brittney Sia says it's her goal to redefine what she sees as career stereotypes and expectations for Filipino-American women.

"It's one of two things: you are expected to go into business or be a nurse," Brittney said.

Brittney is out to shatter those stereotypes as one of the newest participants in a Disney program called Code: Rosie, a unique development program that aims to increase the representation of women in technology.

Before beginning the Code: Rosie pro-

gram, Brittney had been a Guest Service assistant at Disney's Grand Californian Hotel & Spa. As part of her participation in the program, she has taken a new role as an entry-level product manager with Disney Media Entertainment and Distribution (DMED). After the six-week program, Brittney and the other participants will have the opportunity to be placed in a permanent product manager role within DMED Technology. "That's what I love about this company — it offers a lot of opportunities, whether it's continuing your education with Disney Aspire, Code: Rosie or simply learning a new role," Brittney said.

Through the Code: Rosie program, Brittney is gaining hands-on experience in product management and technology. She is currently tasked to make improvements to the official *Star Wars* website. "Each lesson of the day, I am applying directly to my current project," Brittney said.

Brittney is passionate about defining her professional identity while celebrat-

ing her cultural heritage — and encourages her fellow cast members to do the same. "Don't be afraid to stand up for yourself and share your unique identity or have conversations and educate others," she said. She is well on her way to redefining the cultural stereotypes of Filipino-American women and other diverse cultures. "We are not tied down to one type of career or talent. We can do it all and I think that is something that should be encouraged within every culture," she said.

Looking to the future in her new role as part of the Code: Rosie program, she is excited to build an even bigger community of cast who identify as AANHPI. To Brittney, the most rewarding part about being Filipino-American and being a part of the AANHPI community is having a group of friends to always fall back on.

"There is a saying in Filipino culture — *isang bagsak* — which directly translates to "one clap or one fall." It symbolizes unity in a community where we all fall and rise together," Brittney said.



BRITTNEY SIA, PRODUCT MANAGER, CELEBRATES HER FILIPINO-AMERICAN HERITAGE.

DISNEY CAST LIFE

Walking, Rolling and Hopping to Be Well

By Amy Cassidy

Wellness enthusiasts laced up their sneakers, gathered their friends and family and celebrated the return of an iconic cast member event at the Disneyland Resort.

The Disney Be Well Cast Member Family & Friends 5K made a triumphant return, featuring the well-known and well-loved Kermit and friends. "Yaaaaaay!"

Cast members Joy and Billy Hopke were especially excited to participate. This past year, Joy underwent brain surgery and has since been in recovery. "Don't let any obstacle get in your way. You can overcome anything; we're proof of that," Billy said of his wife's journey to recovery. "Any hurdles can be overcome; it's just one step at a time. And have fun — that's the most important part!"

Welcoming our racers were Disneyland Resort Ambassadors Nataly Guzman and Mark Everett King Jr., alongside Senior Vice President of Operations Patrick Finnegan.

Participants walked, ran, rolled and leapfrogged through the Happiest Course on Earth. In Disneyland park, cast kicked off on Main Street, U.S.A., strolled through the Wild West of Frontierland, journeyed through *Star Wars*:



CAST MEMBERS JOY AND BILLY HOPKE CELEBRATE OVERCOMING HURDLES TOGETHER.

Galaxy's Edge and so much more. In Disney California Adventure park, racers got their kicks on Route 66, explored Avengers Campus and celebrated a race well done with their pals on Pixar Pier.

"It's really exciting to have these

events back," said Skyler Rendon, Attractions hostess at *Star Wars*: Galaxy's Edge. "The best part about today was being able to meet up with all my friends and seeing everyone happy and together again."



RUNNERS REJOICE AS THEY MAKE IT TO THE FINISH LINE!

SEE IF YOU CAN SPOT THE FIVE DIFFERENCES IN THESE TWO PICTURES

Runners proudly display their medals at the Muppets-themed Disney Be Well Cast Member Family & Friends 5K at Disney California Adventure park! Yaaayyy! See if you can spot the differences!



ANSWERS:

1. Woman's Mickey ears are missing. 2. Two rollercoasters. 3. Green sweater on woman. 4. Numbers changed on runner's banner. 5. Woman's skirt is longer.

+ FEATURE STORY CONTINUED FROM P.1

ing computer science at California State University, Fullerton. One speaker in particular left an indelible impression that helped catalyze her positive trajectory.

No stranger to public speaking, Princeton Parker grew up preaching at his local church, and when he became a cast member, he was selected to be a speaker for Disney Dreamers Academy at the Walt Disney World Resort. This program invites 100 exceptional young students between the ages of 13-19 each year to participate in an exclusive four-day event where they have a chance to listen to celebrity speakers, learn from Disney leaders and executives, and leave with a sense of motivation and hope for their future. As many of the speakers and fellow students were also from the Black community, Princeton cites this program as making him feel represented in the Disney brand for the first time, and has been involved over the last 11 years as a speaker, essay judge and media representative.

So, it is no wonder that when Princeton became a food and beverage

manager at the Disneyland Resort, with his motivational speaking experience in mind, his leaders jumped at the opportunity to recommend him for the Disney Speakers Bureau. This would give him the chance to share his story and help inspire students through the workforce development initiative. It combined his love of empowering others to see their full potential and supporting important work in the community with United Way.

When he speaks to groups of students, Princeton emphasizes the importance of focusing on one's identity before deciding what to do in life and career.

"When we identify who we are first, the what we want to do becomes clearer and more intentional," Princeton expresses. "It is amazing to see their eyes when they see who they are first. What the students are most passionate about is clarity, confidence and courage to now act out what they've become clear about. It is an opportunity to not just talk about career development, but to empower the individual behind the career. That's what Disney magic is all about ... it is empowering you to be the hero in your

own story."

As Cindy listened to Princeton's presentation, she took his message to heart and learned how to define her own success, rather than comparing herself to others.

"I learned no matter where I go, I'll always be OK. I'll always end up where I am supposed to be. I'll always be successful as long as I put in the work and effort in order to do it."

Princeton's words emboldened Cindy so much that she applied to become a Disney cast member! During her interview, Cindy emphasized the impact that Princeton had left during the virtual leadership sessions through United Way. The recruiter was so moved by Cindy's story that he reached out to Princeton to share that he "had the pleasure of hiring" Cindy to work in food and beverage at the Disneyland Resort, the same department Princeton worked in when he presented to Cindy's school.

Princeton was elated and grateful to have had a small role in Cindy's journey: "Cindy, you represent the very reason why I do that [speak to students]," Princ-

eton shared with her directly as they had a special opportunity to meet again virtually. "It's not just that someone comes to work for Disney; that's just icing on the cake. But it's that students feel empowered to trust the answer they're looking for is within," he shared. "This is the work that makes me believe that I have a purpose within the company."

Princeton and Cindy's story is a testament to how powerful those moments of connection can be, even in virtual settings. Cindy hopes to impart the values that she learned through these sessions to her fellow cast members and college classmates who may be struggling with confidence.

"Thank you so much for the speech and everything because even right now I'm stressed because of work and school and finals are coming up. But I know I'm going to be OK ..." Cindy shared to Princeton with appreciation and gratitude. "I remember who I want to be versus what I want to do, and about success — as long as I enjoy what I'm doing and I'm happy doing it, then I feel like that's success to me."

COMMUNITY

HAPPY QUINCE AÑOS TO DISNEYLAND RESORT HOLA AND ITS READING PROGRAM

By Brandon Killman

Fifteen years ago, Disneyland Resort cast member Clara Alvarez signed up for a new group at work called HOLA, dedicated to Hispanic leadership advancement. At the same time, she was starting a new program in her son's third grade classroom to help improve students' reading skills.

HOLA is celebrating its 15th anniversary as a Business Employee Resource Group, or BERG, at the resort, and the weekly readers program Clara started to help her son is marking its 15th year of collaboration between HOLA and Orange Grove Elementary School in Anaheim.

It's estimated that HOLA members have read books to 1,500 third graders over the years. "We have had cast members from all over the resort, from firemen and nurses to executives," said Clara, who works in Merchandise and is now an HOLA leader. "But no matter what level in the company you're in, we always bring the magic."

The reading program went from in-person to virtual during the pandemic, with 15 HOLA members volunteering weekly this year to expand the minds and imaginations of young students.

"We now notice that students are more interested in reading and more motivated; some students can't even wait to get to third grade," Clara said.

Clara recalled that the early years of the program reminded her of her own



HOLA LEADERS MAKE READING FUN AT ORANGE GROVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

childhood, when she was a student attempting to learn English as a second language.

"I just remembered how hard it was for me to learn how to read in English and not having my parents around because they were busy working and starting a life here in the United States," Clara said. "I thought, these kids need us, and they need role models. Someone who has gone through what they are going through."

Every year, the 12-week program, which is supported by Disney

VoluntEARS, starts off with a career day. This year's event included cast from Human Resources, Marketing and Operations, encouraging students to dream about all the possibilities and paths available to them if they strive for it.

"Showing these students that there are so many opportunities — these types of programs open up the eyes of these kids and maybe even their parents," said Career and Education Program Manager Claudia Duron Burke, HOLA co-chair.

Disney VoluntEARS finally met students in person during the last session

in early May. HOLA leader Juan Aldava read one last book to the students on the Cinco de Mayo holiday. Students wrote thank you cards and read them to HOLA volunteers and they looked forward to reading more in the summer after receiving new books from Disney's Magic of Storytelling program, which donated 240 books to the school's third grade students this year.

"What Clara has created from the start to what it has now evolved to, there is hope for so many opportunities in the future," Claudia said.

DISNEY CAST LIFE

Disneyland Resort Cast Members Thrive Together with Mentorship Program

By Kristen Lewis

"How can we create a program to provide mentorship with someone who looks like you, or resonates with things that are important to you?" Robert Clunie, general manager for Disney California Adventure park, posed this question in a conversation with other resort leaders about incorporating inclusion into a program for cast members.

After careful consideration and planning, Business Employee Resource Groups (BERGs) at the Disneyland Resort co-created Thrive@Disney: A BERG Mentorship Program. Launched in 2021, Thrive@Disney united cast members across different areas of business and leadership levels to foster personal and professional development in a diverse and inclusive setting.

Over 300 cast members participated in the first cohort. To celebrate the conclusion of the nine-month program, 100 participants recently gathered at a closing ceremony held at the Disneyland Hotel. Since most of the groups met online during the program, this event was special because it provided the opportunity to meet in person.

Cast Activities Senior Manager Sandee Alsup had always wanted to



THRIVE MENTORS AND MENTEES CELEBRATE THE PROGRAM'S "GRADUATION" TOGETHER AT THE DISNEYLAND HOTEL.

be a mentor to fellow cast members, and through Thrive@Disney, she had

the opportunity to mentor Resort Sales Coordinator Amanda Armas and Disney

California Adventure Area Chef Duke Brown.

Amanda and Duke joined as mentees to explore different professional areas of the company and meet new people. During their time in the program, Sandee was able to introduce them to various cast members across the resort. "It's a great reminder that learning comes from everywhere," said Sandee. "Being able to branch out and connect with different people [with] different points of view challenges you to think differently."

Choosing a mentor who worked in an area that Amanda was interested in learning more about and keeping an open mind helped her get the most out of the program. "[Thrive@Disney] gave me a safe platform to express what was on my mind," she said.

Duke said it's important to be honest with your mentor. "Let them know exactly what you are looking for," he said. But not all conversations had to be about work. Some of his most memorable conversations with Sandee were about their personal lives.

It was not just the mentees who learned from the experience. As a mentor, Sandee was inspired by Duke and Amanda's openness and willingness to learn. "Don't put limits on it," said Sandee. "Use every conversation, every moment, every connection as an opportunity to grow. You may grow in ways that are unexpected. Absorb it all and enjoy the moment."



SANDEE ALSUP AND HER THRIVE MENTEES AMANDA ARNAS (CENTER) AND DUKE BROWN.



What I would say to anybody considering any [Disney] Aspire program is 'go for it'. We have a wonderful company that is willing to support our goals, and there's something for everybody.

– Liane Walls

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