

## Dr. Vicki Alexander, "Mother of Berkeley Public Health," to receive 2017 Benjamin Ide Wheeler Award - Oct. 28



**T**wenty years ago, African American babies born in Berkeley had the lowest birth weight in the nation among cities of similar size, four times lower than that of white infants. Today, that disparity has been cut in half. Berkeley has Dr. Vicki Alexander to thank.

In 1995, "Dr. Vicki," as she is affectionately known, accepted a position as Maternal Child Health Director and Health Officer for the city

of Berkeley. A few years into her tenure, she noticed the birth weight disparity in a federal study that came across her desk.

"I couldn't believe it," says Dr. Alexander. "In Berkeley, of all places, who would expect that?"

Low birth weights have been linked to health complications and chronic conditions later in life, including diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. Dr. Vicki mobilized her team and formed the Black Infant Health Program. By 2009, the birth weight disparity for African-American babies in Berkeley was 2-1, on par with the national average. This successful initiative is just one of the many reasons the Berkeley Community Fund will honor her with the 2017 Benjamin Ide Wheeler Award,

continuing a tradition started in 1929 to honor the city's "most useful citizen."

Dr. Wheeler, the award's namesake and University of California president (1899-1919), recognized that the fundamental basis for democracy is drawn from healthy local communities. Fostering a healthy local community has been Dr. Vicki's passion since she first came to Berkeley. Over the years, she has served as Chair of the Advisory Board for the Berkeley Black Infant Health Program; Interim Health Officer for the City of Berkeley; Director of Berkeley's Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Program; and Director of Berkeley's Adolescent Health Program.

The parents of two of our **2017 High Hopes Scholars, Tyjah Banks (UC Merced)**

**and Nya Sandeford (Barnard College)** participated in one of those programs, which gives us extra cause to celebrate. Both young women have plans to pursue careers in medicine.

After "retiring" in 2006, Dr. Vicki founded Healthy Black Families, a Berkeley-based nonprofit that is working to bring about health equity for all African-American babies, children and families. She also was co-leader of the successful "Yes on Measure D" campaign for a soda tax in Berkeley in 2014.

**Join us in honoring Dr. Vicki at the Berkeley Community Fund's annual dinner gala and fundraiser on Saturday, October 28, at the Pauley Ballroom. For more information, to sponsor a table or purchase individual tickets, visit our website at [berkfund.org](http://berkfund.org) or call Fatima at (510) 542-2126.**

## Tippett Studio's Truly Special F/X

*The West Berkeley company promotes a culture of mentoring*

**Y**es, sometimes dreams do come true. Just ask Morris Callegari, a 2009 Berkeley Community Fund High Hopes scholar. Morris, a gifted visual artist, graduated from UC Riverside with a degree in Fine Arts. He knew that finding a job in the art world would be challenging. After graduation, he came back to Berkeley and freelanced.

In 2015, Morris was hired as a production assistant for Tippett Studio, one of the leading visual effects and animation companies in the entertainment industry with two Academy Awards, four Clios and two Emmys. Tippett Studio, founded by visual effects and animation wizard Phil Tippett and his wife, BCF board member Jules Roman Tippett, is a pioneer in the visual effects field. Tippett was at the forefront of leading the visual design team for classics such as *Star Wars*, *Jurassic Park* and more recently, the *Twilight* series.

"I am really happy to have been able to get a job and stay within the arts, and to do so at such an amazing place, working with such a special team" says Morris, whose ultimate goal is to create and direct his own animated television series. "I mean — *Star Wars*! I am learning so much."

Tippett Studio is one of the Berkeley Community Fund's most dedicated and, shall we say, animated supporters. Jules, the company's CEO, has been a BCF board member since 2009. An accomplished filmmaker and editor, she has generously and artfully



Sanjay Das, Morris Callegari, Jules Tippett and Ken Kokka at Tippett Studio

produced the videos shown at BCF's annual dinner for many years. Jules' and Phil's daughter Maya, a Brooklyn-based filmmaker, also donates her time and talents by editing the videos.

"I love the fact that BCF is a relatively small organization and hyper-focused on its own community," says Jules. "I also like that we — mentors and donors and community members — have the opportunity to interact directly with the people we support. When I make the video every year, I absolutely love talking to the kids. I have learned so much from them! Hearing about their hopes and dreams and the obstacles they are overcoming to succeed in college just humbles me."

Other members of Tippett

Studio have become part of the BCF family, too. Sanjay Das, the studio's COO, mentored 2008 High Hopes scholar Jay Gupta. Jay graduated from UC Berkeley in 2016 with a degree in neuroscience and is now a researcher for the Department of Health and Human Services in South Carolina.

"Being a mentor is a great feeling," says Sanjay. "It is very satisfying to know you have had a role in helping make someone's life better, to help them develop as a human being and to reach their potential." Jay agrees. He is mentoring a Berkeley High School student and helped him get an internship in Tippett's animation department this past summer. The studio known for special f/x has ripple f/x, too.

### Our May 2017 Graduates

- Paola Alonso (2013)**  
BA, Economics  
Boston University
- Anais Arias Aragon (2013)**  
BA, Music Theory & Composition  
Boston University
- Juan Azuara (2012)**  
BA, Sociology  
UC Berkeley
- Elizabeth Cho (2013)**  
BA, Business Administration  
UC Berkeley
- Aisha Eisenberg (2013)**  
BA, Environmental Studies  
UC Santa Barbara
- Yoseline Escalante Buendia (2013)**  
BA, Public Health Studies  
UC Davis / UC Irvine
- Negar Esfandiari (2013)**  
BA, English and Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies  
George Washington University
- Semhal Gessesse (2013)**  
BA, Social and Cultural Analysis; Politics  
New York University
- Evan Ho (2013)**  
BS, Molecular and Environmental Biology  
UC Berkeley
- Ben Johnson (2012)**  
BA, Architecture  
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
- Jalena Keane-Lee (2013)**  
BA, Political Science and Cinema & Media Studies  
Wellesley College
- Lychou Phey (2013)**  
BA, Business Administration  
UC Riverside
- Colleen Sparks (2013)**  
BA, Community Studies  
UC Santa Cruz
- Tonisha Williams (2011)**  
BA, Health Education  
San Francisco State University
- Bronson York (2012)**  
BA, Music  
University of Oregon



We are a community of people working together to bridge the opportunity divide for Berkeley youth from lower-income families. We provide scholarships, connections and other support instrumental to success in college and beyond.

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chuck Fanning, President  
Diana Burden  
Ann Marie Callegari  
Penelope Mayer Finnie  
Abigail Garcia  
Mia Gittlen  
Susie Goodin  
Oseyi Ikuenobe  
Jackie Krentzman  
Stephanie McKown  
Jessica Pers  
William Rogers  
Kad Smith  
Ann Smulka  
Janet Tam  
Jules Tippet

#### ADVISORY BOARD

Narsai David,  
Chairman Emeritus  
Marcia Argyris  
Skip Battle  
Amrita Singhal  
Michael Traynor  
Dorothy Walker

#### STAFF

Joleen Ruffin  
Executive Director  
Joleen@berkfund.org

Lynn Walker  
Lynn@berkfund.org

Linda Osuorji  
Linda@berkfund.org

Fatima Rodriguez  
Fatima@berkfund.org

2111 Martin Luther King Jr. Way  
Berkeley, CA 94704  
(510) 542-2126

## Behind the Scenes at BCF

*New staff, new board members, fresh ideas*

We're building a fantastic team at BCF, preparing to grow and scale our programs to help Berkeley youth complete college and launch their careers. **Linda Osuorji**, our newest College Success Advisor, joined our staff in July. She works with Lynn Walker, providing support services to our scholars and mentors. Most recently, Linda was a Match Specialist for Big Brothers and Big Sisters of the Bay Area, where she managed a mentor program and facilitated mentor-mentee relationships.

BCF prides itself on being a learning organization that respects the experiences of and engages our scholars in the design and delivery of our programs, so the programs are effective and relevant to their lives. In July, alumna **Fatima Rodriguez-Ortiz** (UC Santa Cruz, 2016) joined BCF full-time as the Program Coordinator for our newly launched Promise Program for students attending Berkeley City College. Interns

**Omar Aguilar-Martinez** (2015 Scholar) and **Bubacarr Kora** (2016 Scholar), together with Lynn and Fati, helped develop and lead our transition-to-college workshops this summer. They also organized community-building events, volunteer projects at Habitat for Humanity, and led our annual Tilden Park hike.

**Pamela Rodriguez-Ortiz** (2015 Scholar) worked on short-term social media and marketing projects and **Juan Azuara** (2012 Scholar and recent Cal grad) provided data migration and book-

keeping services. All were employed through Berkeley's YouthWorks program. BCF alumna **Jalena Keane Lee** (Wellesley, 2017) returned to speak at our High Hopes Scholarship awards ceremony in June. Reflecting on her experience at school, Jalena gave well-received advice to our newest scholars.

**William Rogers, CEO of Goodwill San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin Counties** joined our board of directors this past spring. Many know William from his years as Berkeley's Deputy City Manager. **He played a key role in developing the City's 2020 Vision** designed to close racially predictable opportunity gaps in Berkeley's public schools.

We're thrilled that **Abigail Garcia** has joined our board, too. Abby is **Associate Director of Academics for UC Berkeley's Pre-College TRIO Programs**. She previously taught high school in Los Angeles for eight years and is fierce about making higher learning a viable option for low-income, first generation-to-college students.

**Many thanks for the in-kind donations from local businesses who supported our summer workshops: Artist & Craftsman, The Cheese Board Collective, Eastwind Books, Peet's Coffee & Tea, Red Tomato Pizza, and Trader Joe's.**



*Our staff, from left:* Omar Aguilar-Martinez, Bubacarr Kora, Joleen Ruffin, Linda Osuorji, Lynn Walker, Pamela Rodriguez-Ortiz and Fatima Rodriguez-Ortiz.



Jalena Keane Lee



Juan Azuara



Summertime fun at Habitat for Humanity

## Our Newest Scholars Envision their Future

*Your support of our 2017 scholarship recipients helps close opportunity gaps*

**Guadalupe Acevedo's eyes light up** when she shares her plans to become an emergency room physician. The first-year student at UC Santa Cruz found a clear sense of direction while interning with Kaiser Permanente's KP Launch, a program that gives youth practical work experience and the opportunity to learn directly from health care professionals. **Harlan Brawer** enthusiastically describes his lab work with *drosophila* at UC Berkeley, where he honed his research skills while attending Berkeley High. He's headed to UCLA with plans to explore science and engineering courses before choosing a major. Throughout high school, **Alexis Fuentes** immersed himself in creative writing and coding. The Cal State East Bay freshman aspires to be a software engineer. So does **Midori Thrower**, who participated in iCLEM at Lawrence Berkeley Labs and is now a student at the University of San Francisco.

These four Berkeley youth are among the many 2017 High Hopes scholarship recipients pursuing degrees in STEM fields — the largest number since the



*Front row:* Rebeca Torres Avila, Tyjah Banks, Guadalupe Acevedo, Maria Sophia Carrillo Hernandez, Citlaly Hernandez Duran, Ariadna Cruz, Brandon Bailey, Kaysha Duncan, Andrea Lewis, Miguel Cristobal Frias *2nd row:* Alejandro Gonzalez, Emily Yu, Nya Sandeford, Koshi Tamang, Alexis Fuentes, Harlan Brawer, Farah Jahangir, Opal Klotz, Arturo Verdin *Back row:* Raymundo Saldana, Nia Byrd, Alexander Tesfaldet, Marshatta Porter, Fares Muthana, Cieara Simmons.

*Missing:* Timera Harrell and Midori Thrower

High Hopes program started in 2008. Thirteen aspire to work in medical-related professions as physicians, surgeons, nurse practitioners, research scientists or public health educators. The work appeals to their intellect as well as to their desire to help others, a common trait among our scholars.

Changing the world for the better is also on the minds of our 2017 scholars pursuing degrees in other fields. **Cieara**

**Simmons**, who interned in Congresswoman Barbara Lee's office, is studying urban planning at UC San Diego. **Raymundo Saldana**, a UC Berkeley freshman who developed an interest in education while volunteering in kindergarten classrooms, is thinking about a career teaching history, as a platform to encourage young Latinos to pursue higher education. Inspired by their studies abroad

families, who develop products relevant to their lives, and who represent our diverse country. Along the way, you're enabling them to focus more on their studies and to stress less about how to afford expensive textbooks and computers, pay ever-increasing tuition, student fees, food and transportation costs, and, for some, health insurance or rent. Thank you for joining their efforts to make the world a better place.

*BCF granted 27 High Hopes Scholarships this year, including 4 Berkeley Rotary Club scholarships. Each scholar will receive \$16,000, paid over 4-years, if they earn a GPA of 2.5 or greater. Each has access to support from a College Success Advisor and is matched with a volunteer mentor from the community. To learn about our mentor program, contact Lynn Walker <lynn@berkfund.org> or Linda Osuorji <linda@berkfund.org>.*

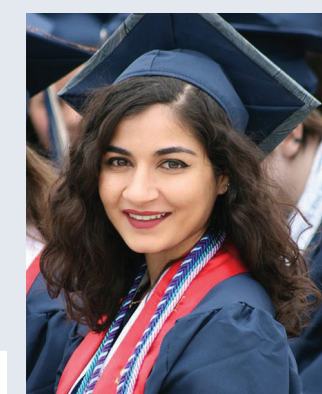


Ben Johnson (BA 2017)

### Did you know?

- In 2015, the median income for Berkeley adult males with only a high school diploma was \$26,500 compared to \$50,800 for those with a bachelor's degree and \$75,000 for those with a graduate degree.
- The median income for Berkeley adult females with only a high school diploma was \$29,000 compared to \$41,300 for those with a bachelor's degree and \$53,000 for those with a graduate degree.

Help Berkeley youth succeed on their path through college.  
[berkfund.org/donate](http://berkfund.org/donate)



Negar Esfandiari (BA 2017)