



# IRL Newsletter

June 2021

ISSUE 16

## Our Mission:

To empower individuals of all abilities to take charge of their own learning and lives, making it possible for them to be competent, caring and contributing members of society; and to provide learning opportunities for families, professionals, and communities to support those efforts.

## In the Spotlight! - Graduation!



On Thursday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, Westmoreland Academy hosted their graduation ceremony to honor the eight seniors graduating and the four 8<sup>th</sup> graders promoting to high school. The ceremony included the awarding of the Valedictorians, Devin M. and George Sawyer H. and the Breton Leadership Awards were given to Dario C.-P., Julian L., Jacob R., and Christian R.

There were 78 guests at the graduation ceremony with students and families on campus and at home celebrating virtually. It was a huge technological task to set up the event as in-person and to offer a Zoom option for those at home, but it was accomplished and was a beautiful, emotional ceremony with lots of tears shed by staff, parents, and even some students.

The graduates included: Claude Sebastian A., Daniel P., George Sawyer H., Kishan S., Marky R., Megan C., Randy B., and Stuart C.-D. Three of the graduates are on their way to community college, four will be attending day programs, and one is considering starting his own mobile movie screening service.



On Wednesday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, Almansor Academy hosted two graduation ceremonies with approximately 50 guests in-person and virtually at each ceremony. The first ceremony honored the twelve 8<sup>th</sup> graders promoting to high school and the second ceremony honored the seven seniors graduating from high school. The high school graduation ceremony was a fabulous event with speeches by staff, a former student's mother, and several of the graduating seniors, along with beautiful music from the Northeast LA Jazz Group. The day was filled with mixed emotions of happiness and gratefulness for the ability to celebrate in-person, but a bit of sadness in not being able to have all students, families, Board of Directors, and IRL leadership present at the event.

The graduates included: Crystal I., Arelly Q., Juan C.-C., Keena B., Brandon M., Amalia F.-H., and Xavier E.-B. There are three students who have plans of attending community college in the future and others who are looking forward to working. During the ceremony, the Daniel Joseph Canal scholarships were awarded to Amalia F.-H., Crystal I., and Xavier B. The Breton Leadership Awards were given to Keena B, Daniel G., Julio G.-G., and Adrian A.

IRL wants to congratulate all 8<sup>th</sup> graders promoting to high school and all high school graduates! We wish them success on their next adventure and remind them that Almansor Academy and Westmoreland Academy are always here for them!

## Partnerships



While IRL is quickly approaching another end of its fiscal year, new partnerships are being created to ensure everyone in our community has access to our programs. After a successful company presentation at the San Gabriel Chamber of Commerce Virtual Networking Event back in March, in celebration of National Autism Awareness Month, IRL was invited to join the Arcadia Chamber of Commerce.

This new partnership will help to expand the scope of our services in the communities we serve by creating access to new job employment opportunities for clients from Transition and Adult Services Program, Almansor Academy, and Westmoreland Academy. Additionally, this new partnership will also help us to increase brand awareness, opportunities for new grants, reach out to more individual donors who are willing to support our cause, and to engage with more community volunteers. We look forward to creating amazing opportunities with the Arcadia Chamber of Commerce.

IRL's partnership with South Pasadena Grocery Outlet and South Pas Fitness has continued to grow despite the pandemic. Grocery Outlet and South Pas Fitness have partnered with Transition and Adult Services (TAS), along with Almansor Academy to provide paid internships and employment opportunities for our adult clients and students. Since opening in October 2020, Grocery Outlet has hired four adult clients through the Paid Internship Program (PIP) and has hired five Almansor Academy students through the Workability Program with two students currently still working through the summer.



On June 4<sup>th</sup>, Almansor Academy awarded Ernesto and Karina with the Employer of the Year award as they hired more students than any other partnering company during this past school year.



South Pas Fitness opened in December 2020 and has hired five adult clients through the PIP program and hired one Almansor Academy graduate through the On-The-Job Training program. As South Pas Fitness begins to fully reopen, they hope to hire a couple of more TAS clients permanently.

IRL is grateful for the continued partnership with these two new businesses and hopes for on-going collaboration as we see South Pasadena re-open over the next couple of months. If you are aware of any businesses that would be interested in partnering with the TAS program, please have them contact Program Manager Karissa Tressa at [ktressa@redesignlearning.org](mailto:ktressa@redesignlearning.org).

## Ways You Can Help!



"AmazonSmile" is a website operated by Amazon with the same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice. Go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), login like normal, choose your charity (Institute for the Redesign of Learning) and you start to give with every purchase. Every dollar helps!

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