

## CUSD Cares

### Laloboy Foundation

Season: 3 Episode: 1 – October 2022

Director of Counseling and Social Services, Brenda Vargas and Paolla Jordan, founder of the Laloboy Foundation. The Laloboy Foundation assists families with providing free counseling awards to families in need of financial assistance for their child(ren).

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**Brenda Vargas:** 0:06

Welcome parents and community to another addition of C U S D Cares. Today I am joined by an amazing community partner and former parent of C U S D Paolla Jordan. Paolla welcome to C U S D Cares.

**Paolla Jordan:** 0:22

Thank you for having me.

**Brenda Vargas:** 0:24

Absolutely, this is long overdue. I think we've chatted about having this conversation for quite some time. Paolla Jordan is representing the Laloboy Foundation. I want to start off, having her share a little bit about how the Laloboy Foundation came to be, because I know it's a very personal story for you Paolla, and so can you share with our parents and community how Laloboy came to be?

**Paolla Jordan:** 0:51

Laloboy is my son, his name was Adrio Romine, and he attended Chandler High School. So, he's been in the Chandler District for quite, quite some time. We lost him a little over three years ago. He died by suicide. He had what you call concealed depression. It's where on the outside it looks fine, and it doesn't appear to be anything different other than a normal teenage boy, but he suffered from anxiety and depression on the inside. He held it in and basically, he hid it very well. So, in losing him we were that family that needed support services, as I was raising them. We did use counseling services to get that support for both the kids. Counseling support is desperately needed here in our families. I have worked with families for the last 12 years and I've noticed a pretty significant demand. So, after losing him, we decided to do something about it, and that's to provide free counseling, financial awards to aid in getting support services for the children.

**Brenda Vargas:** 2:02

Paolla, you & I, we met quite a few years ago at your initial loss and you certainly have turned your pain into action, and I can't imagine what that's been like for you. I don't think anyone knows until they have actually had that experience. We respect and honor you and we are so indebted to you, our community, our department specifically, right, because you have really been doing, the heavy lifting and finding the funds so that we can make referrals and, continue to help families that either are uninsured or underinsured and just need extra assistance. Let's talk a little bit about those services. As you know, you are the person working behind the scenes in finding the funds. Tell us a little bit about how that happens, because I know that it is a lot of paperwork and a lot of grant work, if you would please share with our community what that looks like, from a bird's eye view.

**Paolla Jordan:** 3:00

Right. I actually, work with my daughter in providing these services. So basically, we take the application, do the application process with our families when they call in or by referral with our school counselors, we're able to turn it over in about 24 to 48 hours to give a response about those services that that child can, can receive. And in that we also provide them with a list of vetted counselors here in the valley. I work with other nonprofits. I've made these great connections, so if I don't have a resource, I'm able to call upon other nonprofits too, to help these families. So, we are a really good first phone call. We also work with JFCS (Jewish Families & Children's Services) that also provides counseling services. It's very important that, these parents can make few phone calls to get the services they need for their children.

**Brenda Vargas:** 3:50

What can parents or community members, caregivers expect if there is a referral that's made to you and or if they're connected to you? Like what kind of information does your, nonprofit ask for that we would need to inform our community

**Paolla Jordan:** 4:04

In regards to the application? Yes. So, it's a one-page application. We're only needing one piece of information on a checklist. So, if you're receiving state services, like free and reduced lunch or on HUD or on Access, you qualify. We basically have that conversation if you have private insurance, but money's really tight, we have those clients as well, please do apply. We do look at everything on the application, but at the same time, we might need just one pay stub. So, it's very, very simple. We just try not to make it complicated. The applications are in English and in Spanish, but if they have any questions, they can call us, but for the most part it's pretty self-explanatory. We're just needing to know who they are, what is the name of their student, what school do they go to, and what grade they are in, because we have certain grants that are very particular in certain zip codes. But if we don't have the funds in that account, then Laloboy will also look in other avenues to be able to help them.

**Brenda Vargas:** 5:00

I want parents to understand and caregivers to understand that you protect the privacy and confidentiality of all families that reach out, and that if you're not able to find the appropriate, financial support that you will do everything that you can. Because I know you've even made phone calls to those in my department as well, if you're unable to meet the need and/or additional needs that you uncovered throughout your intake process. As you look at continuing to serve families, because I know that you are very active in our community beyond just Laloboy, but on behalf of Laloboy, being at the table and being a voice for students and families that may be struggling and it's just hard to talk about. What would you want our community just to know and understand about the purpose and mission of Laloboy as you continue to do this work, even beyond the financial support?

**Paolla Jordan:** 5:57

So, what we are very passionate about is making sure our families are not walking alone. Our slogan is we walk together, not alone. And a lot of times they're needing clothing. How am I gonna pay for shoes for my kid? I can't afford it or buy them clothes because they are growing so fast. We have access to free clothing, food, and we also have a resource page on our website in English and in Spanish. That's one start where they can just go to one place and get that information. The other thing I want families to know is that it's okay to ask for help. When I first moved here, 20 some years ago, I was on Access, and I did get food stamps. That was during 911. My son was born the day after 911. I had to ask for help. I couldn't make it on my own. So, this thing that we are all going through as families, it doesn't discriminate as to who has more money in who's got the bigger house or smaller car, whatever. It's that we're all in need time in our journey. And that's why we're here to make sure that you are aware about what's going on and not to be afraid to make a phone call.

**Brenda Vargas:** 7:05

And I think folks are appreciating the fact that we all have different needs at different times, and we've been there at some point, in some way. Sometimes you're calling a friend or neighbor, but it's nice to know that there is absolutely no shame in asking for help and you continuously communicate that in your action and in the work that you're doing. And I think if a family or a parent or caregiver were to want to know more, and learn more about Laloboy, what do you recommend? Where should they start?

**Paolla Jordan:** 7:41

Well, first of all, we have our website, and it has all of our contact information, Laloboy Foundation.com. That's L A L O B O Y foundation.com. That's where they can find us there. The one thing I would like to ask of our community is that we are in need. If you're not able to give any funding, I just learned that through Amazon, there's a wish list that we do have. It could be things for crafts, and we'll actually have some community outreach things that we want to do, but it all takes money. So, if someone wanted to go onto Amazon and purchase it and have it drop shipped to us so that we could do certain things with our students and so forth, that would

be extremely helpful. Whether it's a ream of paper or a toner cartridge, those little things I was told that we can actually request that of our community and we can do a donation receipt, for a one-time purchase on something that is needed. \$20, everything does help. Each student that is getting counseling, we pay up to \$100 per session, so for example, if the counseling's \$125, the parent would only pay 25 and we would pay up to a hundred for that counseling. But if the counseling session's \$75, well they can get probably another extra session out of the \$300 award that each student can qualify for.

**Brenda Vargas:** 9:02

That's huge savings, especially now with inflation and families trying to make ends meet and they're growing families. There's just so many different expenses for families to know and understand that that's how your organization can help support them during a time until they get their feet on the ground and get things going. And what I think is important for families to know and, those that are listening is that once you meet your capacity as far as what you and Laloboy can do, you still check back, you still circle back around. Can you share a little bit about what that looks like and what you try to do?

**Paolla Jordan:** 9:44

Absolutely. So sometimes after the student has or is on their third visit, I will check in with the parent just to kind of dial in, and see what the progress is, like seeing if they need additional services. If there's not a line of students that are waiting for the services, sometimes I can approve a second application or third, depends on the crisis, what's going on, at the moment. But if I find that in the very beginning, if a student is gonna need a lot more support, I usually by asking these questions, I'll be able to know whether Laloboy would be a good path or JFCS. JFCS are able to take things a step further with additional support. So, when I get this feedback from my parents about how their student is doing, that really helps me navigate where I can make some changes or maybe seek out additional services to continue on, maybe a support group. There are support groups here in the valley for teens. They have them online. Some of them are in person, but that's where we come in. Even if our funds are low, we still will have answers. If we don't have answers, then we're gonna talk with people that do. So, we just wanna make sure that the parents and caregivers, whoever is out there that they, can call with confidence to be able to get some additional direction.

**Brenda Vargas:** 11:03

Well, I know one of your biggest strengths is the fact that you establish that trust with parents and caregivers, where then they're willing to share a little bit more about, maybe another gap that they have, and you connect them. So, I appreciate that you establish that trust and you take the time to dial back in and check in with them and see what else, right? Maybe that will come up that maybe we weren't aware of and/or that maybe didn't come, didn't come up in the initial request for financial need. Paolla, I know that as you think about all the different stories and all the different families that you've helped and really impacted and made a

difference with, if you were to share something with parents and community today, what would you want them to know?

**Paolla Jordan:** 11:48

I would, what I've noticed in the last three years, I've talked to a lot of students, I've interviewed them and there's been a common theme. And that is that a lot of students don't feel heard, and they're not validated. And I know that parents lead busy lives, but at the end of the day, they want that time one on one with you as the parent or as a teacher. But they want you to be intentionally listening. You don't necessarily always have to fix their situation. One of the things you can ask them is like, you know, do you just need someone to listen, or do you need some guidance and they'll tell you, No, I just want you to listen. So be very specific and don't shy away from the conversation. I think parents get scared of asking questions about depression and anxiety but reflect back on where you were as a student many years ago. Be honest with your student and let them know you had your struggles. But when you are talking with them, make it about them and try to refrain from inserting yourself on all of your experiences because they need to be heard in those moments. That's what I would say.

**Brenda Vargas:** 12:53

That's great guidance. I think listening is a very, very difficult thing because we wanna jump in right away and try to help and fix, right, as parents. It's hard not to want to do that, because we wanna take away the pain, whatever it is that they're feeling that's heavy. So, I just am so indebted to you, Paolla, please know that our department could not do the work that we do because it definitely takes a village. I know that's a little bit cliché to say, but quite honestly, going beyond the school walls, we have to rely on those people that are willing to step up and you have done more than your fair share of stepping up. And so, on behalf of C U S D, on behalf of the Department of Counseling and Social Services from counselors and social workers that sometimes deal with, some of the heaviest of stories. We thank you. We thank you and your daughter and your family for starting Laloboy. I can only imagine it may not have been easy, but we just appreciate you very much. And so Paolla, I know that as we continue our partnership and growing and learning with what the community needs, what can we as C U S D do better to help support the work that you do?

**Paolla Jordan:** 14:03

So, I can honestly say that working with CUSD in these last three years, you guys have been going through a lot of growth just trying to put a plan together and so forth. And honestly, it makes my job a lot easier when I have the support of the, the district, my teachers, my counselors, social workers, nurses, that makes it easier, and it's just been very inviting. But you guys are my boots on the ground, you know what I mean? So, this is a partnership that not only is the district, it also takes our families, our families have responsibilities with their kids to be working with our school together as a village. I know it is cliché, but it's what I tell everybody. It takes a village to raise one student.

**Brenda Vargas:** 14:49

Absolutely, and all eyes and all ears because, you know, while things might seem great, like they may have seemed for Adrio at some point, right? He was an excelling student and there's so much as a parent that you were proud of. I know you've shared that with me previously.

**Paolla Jordan:** 15:02

Yeah. It doesn't, you know, suicide doesn't discriminate. That's one of the things that a lot of parents said, that is, it can be anyone. And he was valedictorian, and he was very cared for by his peers and he helped a lot. He did a lot of tutoring. That was his legacy and that's what I learned after he died as the students told me.

**Brenda Vargas:** 15:24

Well, he certainly learned that somewhere and it must have started at home. So, thank you for just continuing to do the work. We just honor and respect you and your family and the journey that you're going through and still finding the space to help others. There are just not enough "thank you's". We are just filled with gratitude that you go alongside with us in doing the work and I know you still do your full-time job in addition to this and just serving our community in this way and turning your pain into action and doing good. So, thank you Paolla. And to those of you listening, if you would like to know more about Laloboy Foundation, you can find more information on the [cusd80 .com](http://cusd80.com) website under departments, under Counseling and Social Services under the parent tab. We have the Referral form there, and if you are struggling, please, I encourage you to either reach out, you're welcome to reach out to our department, Department of Counseling and Social Services and/or Laloboy Foundation that we will connect you with the needed resources in order for you to get the appropriate help. Thank you for listening and until next time.