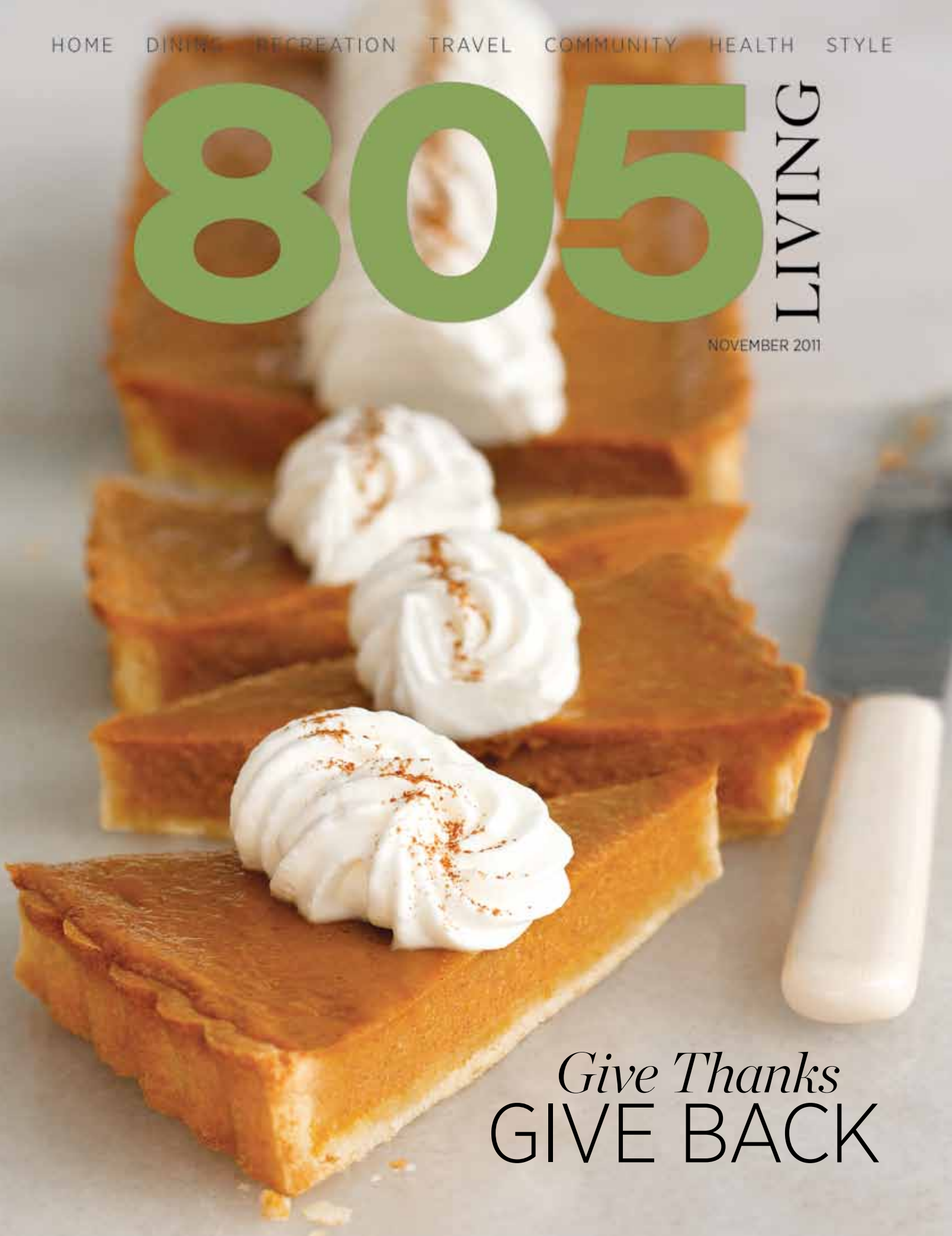
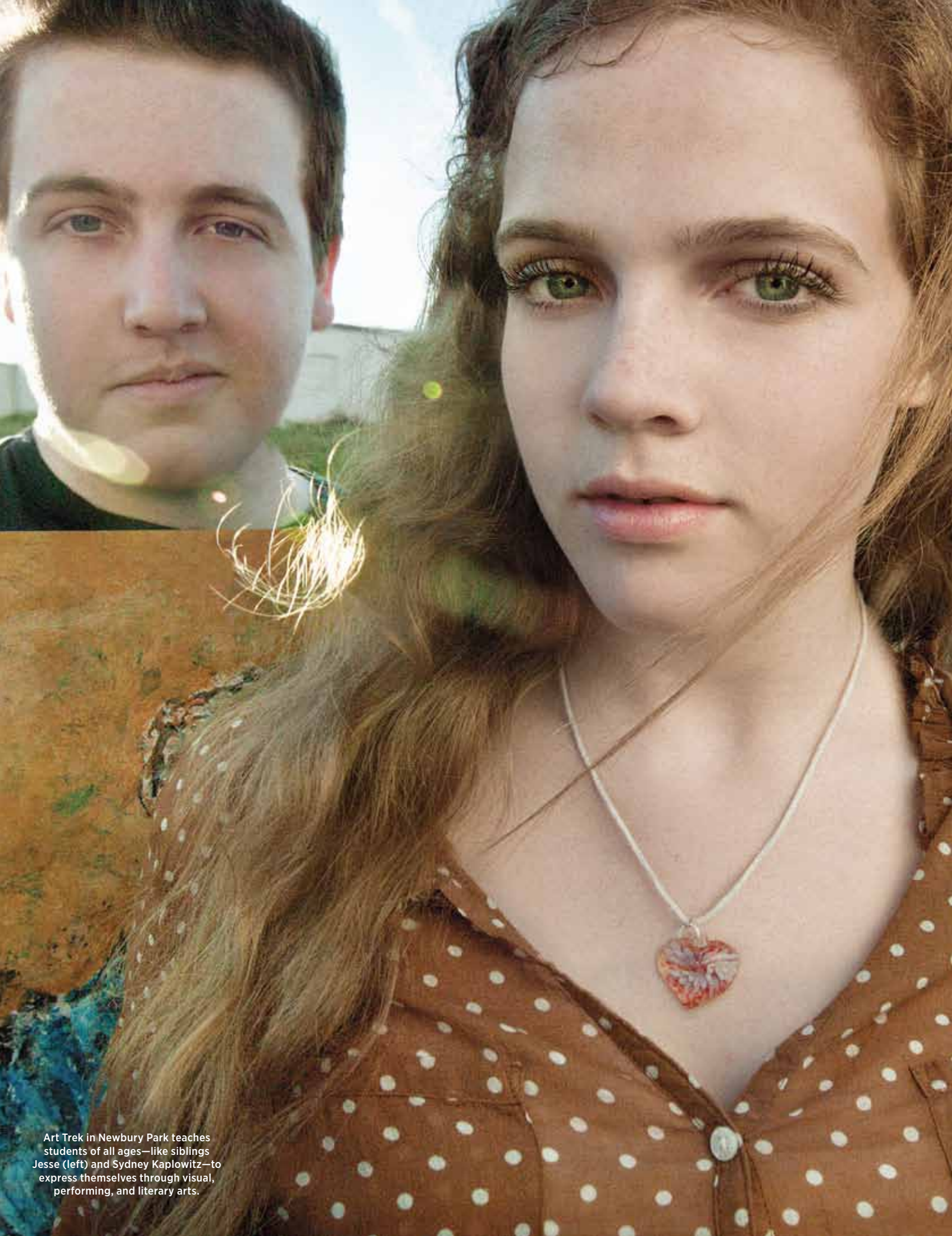


# 805 LIVING

NOVEMBER 2011



*Give Thanks*  
**GIVE BACK**



Art Trek in Newbury Park teaches students of all ages—like siblings Jesse (left) and Sydney Kaplowitz—to express themselves through visual, performing, and literary arts.

# give



*... of your love, time, and determination—as these 805-area altruists have done—and you, too, can change the world.*

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BY ANTHONY HEAD  
PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY MOSS

**FOUR YEARS AGO**, 805 *Living* first featured Teresa Wolf, a registered nurse in Ventura County, who, at the time, was taking her first steps toward achieving her dream of providing no-cost health care in a comfortable environment for end-of-life residents. Last month, with the opening of Our Community House of Hope ([ourhouseofhope.org](http://ourhouseofhope.org)), a four-bedroom facility in Thousand Oaks, Wolf's dream actually came true. In addition to offering hospice care, this new facility will also become a resource center for end-of-life care issues. There are many similar success stories (and soon-to-be success stories) in the local and regional philanthropic and charitable communities. Although each of the following organizations started as a dream, the people behind them were determined to make a difference in the lives of others. Today, each demonstrates that in the end, giving back pays it forward.



### ARTISTIC IMPRESSIONS

Art Trek, Inc. ([arttrek.org](http://arttrek.org)), based in Newbury Park, uses a multifaceted approach to giving back that brings visual, performing, and literary arts to students and others. Whether taking place in familiar school or business surroundings or at Art Trek's workshop studio, the program motivates individuals and groups to express themselves, take creative risks, and create works they didn't think they were capable of producing. Through instruction and hands-on activities, and by emphasizing technique and exploration over any conception of "perfection," Art Trek demonstrates to students how the creative process can lead to successful problem solving—even when the end result is completely unexpected.

*People who give will never be poor.*

—Anne Frank

### SMILES, EVERYONE

James Rolfe is a dentist in Santa Barbara, who, for nearly a decade, has worked directly with people in Afghanistan to build a healthier society through better (and in many cases, basic) dental health. Rolfe has also built and supports a free-of-charge dental clinic in Kabul. Originally a large, metal shipping container, the clinic would eventually be retrofitted in the United States as a fully equipped dental office then shipped to Afghanistan. "[In 2003] I took 500 pounds of dental equipment, a complete portable dental office, to an orphanage in the highlands of central Afghanistan. For three weeks, I worked at over 11,000 feet providing dental care to orphan boys. I was the first dentist that they had ever seen," says Rolfe. Today, three fully trained dentists work in the clinic providing daily treatment. In addition to treating more than 60,000 people, The Afghanistan Dental Relief Project ([adrpinc.org](http://adrpinc.org)) has also trained and graduated five classes of dental hygienists, assistants, and lab technicians.





Over the course of the last decade, James Rolfe has brought free dental care to tens of thousands in Afghanistan.

Carpinteria residents Rebecca Costa-Smith (left) and Lindsey Connolly channeled their philanthropic energy into starting a much-needed school in a Haitian village.



## LIFE LESSONS

Not every young boy or girl appreciates getting up to go to school. In the Haitian village of Mirebalais, however, there are now 125 children who are grateful to rise each morning for the opportunity to learn in a traditional school setting: In October, Ecole Destined for Grace for kindergarten through fourth grade opened to provide nearly free-of-cost education. The school is the first major accomplishment undertaken by Carpinteria-based Destined for Grace Children's Relief ([destinedforgrace.org](http://destinedforgrace.org)).

Rebecca Costa-Smith and Lindsey Connolly, both of Carpinteria, established

this nonprofit corporation in 2008 after Costa-Smith returned from a church-sponsored trip to Haiti. There, she witnessed firsthand the extreme poverty much of the population lives in, became aware of how widespread disease is throughout the country, and learned that the average adult in Haiti has less than three years of formal schooling. Destined for Grace, Costa-Smith and Connolly vowed, would be dedicated to improving the quality of life of as many children in Haiti as the organization could accommodate, but this first project demonstrated how others were affected as well.

"The families around the school are very excited that their children have a place to learn," says Connolly. "They have been very supportive of us through the entire process of getting the school started. Some parents even volunteered and helped with landscaping and yard work to get the school ready for the first day."

In addition to individual donations for financial support, Destined for Grace Thrift Stores have opened in Goleta, Carpinteria, and Santa Barbara. For every \$115 the organization collects, Destined for Grace provides a uniform, supplies, and meals to a student for an entire school year.

*I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver.*

—Maya Angelou

## NEW MEDIA FOR A NEW AGE

Founded in 2002, Regenerate Films ([regenerate.org](http://regenerate.org)) undertakes local and international missions to film and produce events designed to spark discussions on human rights, education, environmental issues, and the arts. This Thousand Oaks nonprofit organization taps the creativity of modern media experts and combines it with the experience of veterans of the entertainment industry to create public service, documentary, and feature programming with social issues at its core. Look for a special story on Regenerate Films in next May's "Arts & Culture" issue of *805 Living*.



## A HANDS-ON APPROACH

"The minute I started my master's program two years ago at Antioch University in Santa Barbara, I knew I wanted to look into where vocational education had disappeared to," says Mark Fargo, now in his second year as director of the BASC Foundation ([thebascfoundation.org](http://thebascfoundation.org)). "I support academics but feel that with more options available, more students who possess a talent in other areas [outside of academics] would be employable upon graduation."

This Ventura-based organization raises money to provide \$1,000 scholarships to students in Ventura County, no matter their career choices. Applicants may be college-bound, but they can also be interested in pursuing jobs in the culinary arts, the fashion design industries, or other accredited trade and vocational training programs. Special education students who need financial assistance to attend a trade school or college are also invited to apply.

Fargo, who is also a teacher and coach, believes that far too often students who are hands-on can feel limited in high school about their futures, and wants BASC to help address more students' career choices. "It's OK if you have a passion for nonacademic goals," he says.



## TOUCHING LIVES

Simi Valley first-grader Joshua Goldenberg is a typical hands-on kind of a kid: He plays with toys, he likes to roughhouse (inside and outside the house), and he likes to shop with his family. But Joshua, who has been blind since birth, has grown increasingly frustrated with the lack of public tools that could make it easier to be the independent person he's growing up as. Recently, while on a grocery trip, Joshua found the absence of Braille in the store too much to take. That's when he and his parents, Christie and Evan Goldenberg, took matters into their own hands—literally.

Joshua began creating Braille plastic labels for many of the food items, and when the family approached the Whole Foods Market in Thousand Oaks to place the labels on the store shelves, the store agreed. Joshua's labels now provide him and other visually impaired people more freedom to browse and shop without having to rely on anyone else for assistance.

"We take for granted our vision," says Evan Goldenberg. "But unless they have another person helping them, there's no way for a blind person to tell the difference between a yellow and a white nectarine. Even as a 7-year-old, Joshua truly understands that he has made a big difference in this one area."

From that single act of self-sufficiency, The Joshua Project ([thejoshuaprojectfoundation.org](http://thejoshuaprojectfoundation.org)) was born. Not only has the local Whole Foods continued to help update and add new Braille stickers, but the parent corporation has also embraced the concept for another store in Newtonville, Massachusetts, which happens to be located very close to both the Carroll Center for the Blind and the Perkins School for the Blind.

"As a society, we should be putting Braille everywhere already. We don't want to just do it in grocery stores. We'd all like this to be the little rock that rolls into a bigger and bigger snowball until it's just expected," says Evan of Joshua's approach to empowering more people to live independent lives. "It should be a part of the fabric of daily culture."

The Joshua Project began with Joshua Goldenberg placing his own Braille labels on the shelves of his local Whole Foods Market.



## BRIDGING THE GAP

For more than 40 years, the environmental science education organization NatureBridge ([naturebridge.org](http://naturebridge.org)) has partnered with several national parks to close the distance between kids and the great outdoors through field science and exploration. This San Francisco-based organization (with campuses in Yosemite National Park, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and Olympic National Park)

recently expanded operations to include Southern and Central California.

NatureBridge now operates educational and stewardship programs at the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and Channel Islands National Park. With several teaching approaches, including customized single- and multi-day programs to the various natural areas, NatureBridge encourages

students in grades four through 12 to explore various aspects of earth and marine science, watershed ecology, and geology.

“You would not believe how lives have been changed,” says board member Paul Culberg. “Kids who live in the inner city who have never seen the ocean and kids from suburbia that have never hiked in the mountains have actually had their lives changed.”

*Time and money spent in helping men to do more for themselves is far better than mere giving.*

—Henry Ford



## BOYS TO MEN

Boys Team Charity reaches out specifically to boys from seventh to 12th grade and their parents to develop a sense of civic and personal pride, responsibility, and altruism. The Boys Team Charity Conejo Valley League Chapter ([boysteamcharity.org](http://boysteamcharity.org)) of this national nonprofit organization is dedicated to bringing parents and sons together to participate in charitable activities and community service, and helping other nonprofit organizations reach their goals.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

And then there are those who help those who are helping others. P.E.P. is more than just a clever acronym for Philanthropic Event Planning ([peposangeles.org](http://peposangeles.org)). This Los Angeles-based organization is a professional, “high-energy” company with the sole purpose of assisting other nonprofits to conceive, develop, and execute successful fundraising events. This full-service company consults with start-up and bare-bones organizations to stage events for compelling causes, such as homelessness, at-risk youth, and spouse and child abuse. ♦

## ON THE RIGHT PATH

The Ventura County-based nonprofit organization Right Road Kids ([rightroadkids.org](http://rightroadkids.org)) has been active in schools and youth organizations for two decades (until 2010 the organization was known as Dream Fund Outreach). Founded by Paula Phillips, the program works directly with kindergarten through sixth-grade students to offer in-school, uniquely designed enrichment programs that also help foster discipline and mutual respect.

As school budgets continue to be slashed, Right Road Kids also partners with local businesses to raise funds for after-school programs, books, and critical classroom supplies.