

2024 Youth of the Year: Haybi Garcia



Haybi, a senior at Waltham High School, stands out as 2024 Youth of the Year with her exceptional leadership and dedication. Despite being an English as a second language learner, she excels academically and socially, serving as a vibrant ambassador and advocate for her peers. As Secretary of the Club's Keystone Leadership Club, she ensures every voice is heard and valued, while her role as an Art Program Assistant showcases her commitment to fostering an inclusive environment. With a 3.8 GPA, Haybi's passion for community involvement and advocacy for diversity make her an inspirational figure within and beyond the Club.

Haybi's Story in Her Own Words

"El error no es caerse, el error es no levantarse"

"The mistake is not in falling, but in failing to rise again."

I was 12 years old in the Summer of 2019, living in Guatemala, and was the caretaker for my younger siblings.

I can clearly remember the call from my mother, who was living in the United States telling me that I was to take the journey, to join her, with my two younger siblings, by myself. I felt lost and trapped between leaving my home which was unsafe and traveling somewhere new with, so much uncertainty and responsibility.

All I could think about was why me? I had already endured so much adversity. The thought of ending my life seemed like the only solution. As my siblings slept, the silence around was a reminder of the weight of my decision. As I stared into the void, searching for a sign or the perfect moment to end my suffering, my sister's voice unexpectedly pierced the silence.

She asked me to make her favorite sandwich for school the next day. At that moment it hit me, that decision would destroy my siblings. They relied on me, and I couldn't bear the thought of causing them harm. So instead, I made a different choice - to take on the responsibility of bringing them to the U.S.

A journey that was supposed to be seven days, took us three long months, ninety grueling days, and a total of two thousand one hundred and ninety hours. Despite the hardships and challenges along the way, I knew deep down that it was worth it for their well-being and their future. What I did not expect, however, was to begin building a future for myself.

I never expected to gain the confidence and skills to believe in myself and a great future. That journey turned out to be a blessing that led me on a path of self-discovery and personal growth. I have learned to accept and forgive myself and to trust in my ability to make the right decisions. My journey is bigger than me.

Mi casa lejos de mi hogar (My home away from home). The Waltham Boys and Girls Club. Provided me with the support and guidance I needed to believe in the value of my own life and worth. The club offered me a safe space to heal, take risks, and grow, allowing me to become the mentor I always wished I had as a child.

Now, I can share my experiences and support others on their journeys.

Last year, with the support from Club Staff, I had the opportunity to establish a Creative Writing program centered around Mental Health. My goal is to create a safe atmosphere for club members to explore, grow, and overcome challenges. Drawing from my own experiences, I aim to serve as a mentor and offer support to those who need it, just as the Waltham Boys and Girls Club did for me. Through this program, I hope to inspire and empower everyone to find their voices and embrace their unique journeys.

Thank you to my Boys & Girls Club family for believing in me.

I once read that the greatest gift you can give someone is to listen.

So thank you all for listening to my story.