



February Hero Profile 2020



“We Are the Care” is a county-wide advocacy initiative comprised of families, professionals in the early childhood care and education field, civic leaders, TK-12 teachers, higher education leaders, employers, business owners, community members, government employees and elected officials who are partnering together to address our local child care crisis.

FEBRUARY’S HERO

Kelsey Sullivan

HOW KELSEY SHOWS HER CARE

Living her passion as a preschool owner/teacher

ONE OF KELSEY’S HOPES

For all of us to remember... that each smile, story, and song is helping children learn and grow.

Kelsey Sullivan is a champion for children— fighting hard to provide much-needed quality space and care for our county’s youngest population.

For 15+ years, Kelsey has pursued her dream in early childhood education. Even while she was still a student at Cal Poly, Kelsey assumed a lead role at a preschool where she worked — then took a giant leap of faith on her own. With the support of her parents, Kelsey opened the Learning Tree Preschool out of her home in Atascadero.

Six years later, as the needs grew, Kelsey found a way to expand her business from a family child care home to a center-based preschool, and rented a location in downtown Atascadero. This proved to be a tricky endeavor, as city zoning and other regulations were often at odds with state child care licensing requirements. After nine years there, with the demand for childcare continuing to increase, Kelsey decided it was time to become a building “owner” and run a preschool program that could truly reflect her vision. She found the ideal space — but the move would take nearly a year. Zoning issues created the biggest roadblock — coupled with a finite escrow timeline and hefty financing process. But Kelsey persevered. She cultivated relationships and pleaded her case along with that of families

desperate for childcare — talking to the local City Council, Planning Commission, and the Mayor of Atascadero. It worked.

On December 1st, 2019, Learning Tree started operating out of its new 5,000 square foot facility along Traffic Way, with a capacity to serve 97 children and their families. The staff there are already collaborating with teachers across the street at San Benito Elementary, helping to forge a more seamless transition to Kindergarten. Kelsey’s strongest motivation of wanting to set kids up to succeed — ultimately led to the kind of community collaboration from which we ALL can benefit.

**Thank you, Kelsey.
You are a true Hands-On Hero.**

Look for more on all of our “We Are the Care” Heroes on COE-TV Channels 2 and 19!



“We Are the Care” was born from “Where’s the Care?”, a Town Hall hosted in May 2019 by First 5 San Luis Obispo County with the support of local stakeholders. It led to the creation of three task forces dedicated to addressing challenges and identifying opportunities to improve and expand our local childcare system. “Hands-on Heroes” is a recognition program, coordinated with partner agencies, that honors individuals making a difference in the lives of young children and families. The year 2020 highlights Heroes in Child Care. To learn more about “We Are the Care” and “Hands-on Heroes”, please visit first5slo.org.