



# MEET OUR YOUTH Elizabeth



Elizabeth entered foster care at the age of 13, emancipated when she was 18, and was homeless for almost a year. Today, 19 years old, Elizabeth is breaking the cycle of child abuse and poverty through education and learning to manage her personal finances as a resident in **Project Independence**.—Rancho Damacitas’ program that supports young adults as they transition from living in foster care to independent adulthood.

“The hardest part of foster care was being separated from my brothers and sisters,” says Elizabeth. There were 12 children total and at age 13, Elizabeth was the oldest. Like many foster siblings, they were separated due to a lack of placement options to keep them all together. She said the experience overall wasn’t bad. “It made me appreciate family, something we take for granted.”

This Spring Elizabeth will be attending MSJC to pursue a degree in Veterinary Medicine. She loves animals as it was one thing she remembers having as a child that brought her joy. Elizabeth stated that one of the greatest benefits for her in **Project Independence** has been the coaching and friendships made. The program has helped her understand her responsibilities and learn how to manage them. The other girls in the program help her know that she’s not alone. There are many others facing the same challenges and making it. Thanks to **Project Independence**, Elizabeth will be one that makes it.