Since opening our first downtown branch in 1882, we have ensured individuals and families in our Greater Los Angeles communities have access to the resources and support needed to learn, grow and thrive. By focusing on the potential of each person and providing opportunities to give back and support neighbors, we empower more than a half million people each year to feel healthy, confident, connected and secure. At the LA Y, we are proud to not just promise, but deliver positive change.
I can remember when I did not feel like my future was full of hope. But after I joined the Weingart East LA YMCA, everything changed. It was my 9th grade year and my friend wanted me to join Youth and Government. In the beginning I was petrified and introverted. I was also intimidated by the outspoken, confident, polished teens in the program. I was just a quiet kid in the back of the room. However, I stayed in the program and, eventually, I began to grow thanks to the kindness I received from the advisors and delegates. I started to volunteer at community events and I joined more youth leadership development programs.

One year ago I helped start a robotics program at my Y. I was already in robotics at my school. That's where I really learned what it meant to be a part of a team, and how far we can go when we work together. We made it to the Robotics World Championship twice, competing against the top robotics students in the world. I wanted to bring that experience to the Y. Today the Weingart East LA robotics team has grown and developed into something truly great. My kids went from knowing nothing about programming to knowing it like the back of their hand. We have expanded to 15 program sites in Boyle Heights, serving kids from 5 to 16. Seeing these young kids enjoy learning, and to witness their progress is such a joy for me. They are our future. That’s why I volunteer at the YMCA. Exposing them to the STEM field is crucial to ensuring we have a successful future.

I still have my own life, grades to maintain, family responsibilities, I tutor, and other extracurriculars — I run track which I love. Two years ago I was diagnosed with an illness that has long term effects, and may never go away. It never stopped me before and it won’t stop me now. I have the YMCA.

The more I got involved in the Y the stronger I got. I realized that I’m never alone and that barriers don’t exist, and every day is a day to make my community better, make it stronger.”