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## Local literacy nonprofit celebrates 20 years of service

Submitted by *Brigitte Jia*



BTSYA Volunteers Brigitte Jia, Chelsea Pelchat, and Jelina Liu at a Saint Mary's college event. Photo provided

Be the Star You Are, a Moraga-based literacy and positive media message charity, will mark a major milestone on Sept. 9 - 20 years of serving the community, county, and country. Staffed with volunteers, no paid employees, and operated solely with the generous donations of individuals and businesses, the volunteers of this nonprofit host an award-winning international radio show interviewing authors and celebrities from around the globe, provide free books to children at events, ship supplies to survivors of natural disasters across the United States, perform pop-up concerts with other BTSYA volunteer musicians throughout Lamorinda and for seniors at Moraga Royale and Aegis, read books to children at the Moraga Faire, paint faces at Saint Mary's events and the Pear Festival, and help children write letters to Santa at the 5A Rent-a-Space Holiday party.

Brigitte Jia has been a proud member and volunteer for this top-rated nonprofit for the past six years. "In my freshman year at Campolindo High School, I stumbled upon the opportunity to be a behind-the-scenes art coordinator," she said. "With the encouragement and enthusiasm of Founder and Executive Director Cynthia

Brian, I soon spread my wings to become a reporter on Express Yourself Teen Radio, brought to the airwaves under the auspices of the BTSYA charity. I quickly sharpened my communicative abilities, giving me the chance to grow from an awkward high school freshman into an open, articulate individual."

There are numerous opportunities for teens to get their community service credits while growing as people and leaders, Jia says. "Besides reporting on the thought-provoking radio broadcast, one of the most popular Be the Star You Are outreach programs is to become a writer on the Star Teen Book Review Team. To date, over 2,000 book reviews have been written and published. The BTSYA motto is: "Read, lead, succeed. To be a leader, you must be a reader."

Through Be the Star You Are programs, Jia says she found her voice and her leadership capabilities. "Because of my involvement with BTSYA, I am no longer afraid to talk to others about my feelings and opinions," Jia said. "As part of this organization, I've grabbed the globe by the horns and have been able to concretely change peoples' lives. The work I do alongside Cynthia and other members of our BTSYA family will stay with me for the rest of my life."

For more information, to volunteer or to make a donation, visit: <https://www.BetheStarYouAre.org>

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