

Dear Teachers and Staff of Valley Oaks,

Thank you so much for all you have done to help Garrett Porter along his path to receiving his High School Diploma. When Garrett came to Valley Oaks he was failing at Petaluma High School. As a parent I knew he was a bright boy, but he was unorganized and easily distracted and this was reflected in his poor grades. In his sophomore year it became apparent to me we needed to try something else and so we looked into Valley Oaks. I was concerned about his grades, but even more, his sense of self. I felt Garrett was starting to take on the attitude that he wasn't smart enough. I wasn't sure if Valley Oaks was the answer. Garrett couldn't turn in his work on time when he went to class daily, how would he do it only coming in an hour once a week?

I would have to say from our initial informative meeting with the principal I was immediately impressed with the school. Our first meeting with his new teacher, Ms. Parker, put Garrett on the straight and narrow. He was given the facts of what was accepted and no excuses would suffice. Garrett was treated with respect and he was eager to progress. He spent hours studying, where before I never saw him study. He was excited about what he was learning and would have long conversations with family and friends at the dinner table about things he was learning. Garrett got a part time job when he turned 16 and spent his own money ordering books on-line to read. He continues to do that, and is an avid reader. Best of all, Garrett feels good about himself. Shortly after attending Valley Oaks I gave him a ride home from his weekly meeting. He said to me in the car ride home, "You know mom, now that I am doing better in school, for the first time, I am seriously thinking about going to College." I knew then that Valley Oaks was the right choice for Garrett.

In January Garrett is going to apply for the Doyle Scholarship and wants to attend SRJC in the Fall. He is currently working for the City of Petaluma Parks and Recreation Department as a building attendant and working toward his Eagle Rank in Boy Scouts. He has graduated 6 months early and in his time at Valley Oaks has made the honor roll and received Leadership Awards. I am very proud of the progress he has made, and I know in my heart, if it hadn't been for Valley Oaks, and the caring staff that has guided him toward success, his outcome may not have been so good.

As an educator myself, I know one of the greatest gifts you can give a child is a good sense of self. If a child can make it through school, feeling good about who they are and what they have to offer, then they will be able to achieve what goals they set for themselves. Garrett has that, and I thank you for it. At a very critical time in his life, Garrett came to Valley Oaks, and was able to turn things around for himself. Thank you for your guidance and support. You have made a difference in this student's life. I am not sure what direction life will take Garrett as he has many interests, but I know what ever he sets his mind to, he has the determination and motivation to achieve it. You have taught him to be an independent learner. Thank you for your dedication, Garrett told me some of the best teachers he has ever had were at Valley Oaks and I am sure as he travels down life's path he will reflect on his time here and the impact it has made on his life.

Thank you,

Teri Porter