



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
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SUBMIT YOUR Y STORY

## CHRISTINA CORONADO'S Y STORY

To say Christina Coronado is one of the sweetest souls to walk the halls of our YMCA association services office is an understatement. Upon telling her that she is my first nomination for "How Cool Is That?" she squints her eyes, gives me a half smile, and softly thanks me. It isn't until a few days later that she inquires, "Are you sure there isn't someone else you would like to nominate as well?" I dash all her hopes and reply with a swift nope. We agree to meet for lunch so I can learn exactly what makes Christina Coronado so darn kind.

On the day we meet the streets of Portland are particularly wet. Traffic is slow. I send Christina a text telling her I am running a few minutes behind. As I pull in to the parking lot Christina gets out of her car and I see her cheerful eyes. We are in front of Gene's

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Deli on Barbur. Christina gestures to over her shoulder to the deli. "It's closed until noon, do you like teriyaki?" We agree on a hole in the wall across the busy street. Teriyaki it is. I wanted this lunch to be perfect and having to move locations last minute leaves me perturbed. I get back into my car hoping this snafu has not spoiled the spirit of this project. I follow Christina's car out of the parking lot and ponder her cheerful resilience despite her acute trepidation over being interviewed. I can't help but compare my anxious self to her flexibility and ease. I'm certain I have broken down over less; I do sweat the small stuff. As I make my way across the street it dawns on me that the spirit of this project will take flight as Christina's story will give it wings. And with that thought I already feel as if we are soaring.



Christina was born in Palo Alto, California and made her way up to Portland four years ago with her husband, Mother, and sister in tow. When asked about her upbringing she illustrates a picture of a traditional Italian Catholic family. In other words, you do not tell people your business and family sticks together. No matter what. Despite the clear description, Christina indicates things were far more complex than that on the home front. Between bites of chicken fried rice and orange chicken she reveals that her parents worked quite a bit and as a result was raised by her Grandmother, Angie, who also works in Child Care. Currently, Grandma Angie is 93 and still working full time! Christina admires her Grandmother's dedication and grit. "Grandma says be strong, depend on yourself, and do what is right." It serves as a daily reminder to keep going, even when the going gets tough. To Christina, she doesn't know how to behave any other way and would not want to for that matter.

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**"ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WELFARE OF OTHERS REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCE HAVE A GROUNDING EFFECT ON A PERSON."**



Halfway through lunch we delve into Christina's teenage years which were spent volunteering. Her interest in serving others began when her baby sister was born with special needs. It was then Christina's world lens broadened. "I realized there are a lot of people who need all sorts of help." With her mother's encouragement, at age 13, she volunteered for a convalescent home. By 15 she began assisting individuals with special needs and was hired on as an employee when she turned 16. Our conversation about her personal commitment to serving those in need ends on this note: accepting responsibility for

How do you remain so patient and kind? "My husband and I rescue dogs and that makes me happy. It rejuvenates me to care for them." She says she has learned that having a source of joy in her life has made it easy to be kind and care for others. When I ask how that shapes her work life she adds that creating trust within her work community is conducive to building a safe environment so that honest communication can thrive. "I'd rather over communicate than under communicate." She laughs and adds that it's also good to know when to stop talking, too!

## **"CHRISTINA'S GRANDMA ANGIE IS 93 AND STILL WORKING FULL TIME AT OUR CHILD CARE."**

the welfare of others regardless of circumstance have a grounding effect on a person. As a result when life becomes fraught with chaos and confusion she remains grounded and guided by her faith. At one point during our conversation she looks me straight in the eye and says "There is a reason for everything. Always." I've heard that before. I've said it to myself. But coming from Christina I felt it.

As we are wrapping up our lunch I see Christina is much more at ease than she was in the beginning. One last question, I tell her.

As Christina heads out of this little hole in the wall I hang back and allow our conversation to settle. The motto she repeated throughout our time together is floating around in my mind. There is a reason for everything. I cannot help but reflect on the twists and turns of Christina's life and how her choices mirrored a set of principles that happen to define our organization; the one she refers to now as 'home'. I guess things do happen for a reason. How cool is that?

We want to hear from you! How has the Y impacted you or your family's life?

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