



THINKING BIG AT YEAR 20

COMMUNITY MINISTRY LIAISON:
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My friend Paolo Leon remembers the gunshots he heard at age 11 outside his family's tiny, shared westside Costa Mesa apartment in the summer of 1994, but he didn't think much about it. Fast forward to 2017, and sadly, gangs and drug deals remain a problem for the westside. For example, just 3 years ago, police arrested more than 25 members of a westside gang financing the Mexican Mafia. But life for Paolo, his family and hundreds of others is entirely different because of one of Trinity's community ministries: **Think Together.**

In response to that 1994 shooting that Paolo remembers as unremarkable, church members from St. Andrews and Trinity worked together with two westside moms, Paty Madueno and Maria Alvarez, to provide the Shalimar Learning Center, giving Paolo and others a safe place to learn, meet mentors, and realize their potential. In 1997, with help from Trinity, St. Andrew's elder Randy Barth formed the nonprofit Think Together with one mission: to expand the early literacy, extended learning, academic intervention, and enrichment programs offered at Shalimar to as many other disadvantaged kids in California as possible in an effort to provide educational equity for those kids—our kids according to Christ's word.



Today, as Think celebrates its 20th anniversary, Think offers Shalimar's programs throughout the state. In Orange County alone, Think offers 42 extended learning and 82 early learning programs. Think has also launched an affiliate, Principles Exchange, to develop and share best teaching and academic intervention practices with public school districts struggling to attain minimum academic standards. Today, the high school graduation rate for Shalimar Center students is 100%. Today, Paolo Leon, a successful architect having graduated from USC Architecture and Chapman MBA, sits on the Board of Think Together.

