

makena@theacorn.com



A CUT ABOVE—Barber Daniel Guevara holds a mirror so Pedro Guzman, 8, can check out his new haircut July 13 in the Conejo Creek Condominiums clubhouse.

While many take haircuts for granted, Tim Hagel, founder of Safe Passage Youth Foundation, knows they can make all the difference.

That's why the Thousand Oaks nonprofit, which is dedicated to supporting at-risk youth, is providing free haircuts to those who can't afford them.

"Our goal with Operation Shear Promise is bringing self-esteem and self-worth," Hagel said. "The side effect is economic prosperity in the household."

Founded in 2012, while Hagel worked for the Ventura County Sheriff's Office, Safe Passage provides youths, especially those in low-income areas, with resources and opportunities that are educational, nutritional and fun in nature. The program offers field trips, science labs, health and wellness clinics, swim lessons, career counseling and even groceries.



“I don’t care how impoverished you are; because of self-esteem and self-worth, the kids need and want haircuts and the parents MICHAEL COONS Acorn Newspapers would give up food versus a haircut for their kids because they want them to fit in at school,” Hagel said.

Operation Shear Promise, hosted the second Saturday of every month, started five months ago.

Daniel Guevara, one of the organizations’ two volunteer barbers, has been donating his time and talent for about three months.

He decided to become a barber six years ago, the same day he dropped out of college. He had been studying kinesiology because he wanted to help people but found the material too challenging and noticed how much his friend was making a difference with his barber shop.

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CUT OUT FOR IT—In the Conejo Creek Condominiums clubhouse in Newbury Park, barber Daniel Guevara, who volunteers with Safe Passage, gives a haircut to 15-year-old Edgar Perez on July 13. MICHAEL COONS Acorn Newspapers

Now, he works at Sport Clips and does about 15 haircuts once a month for Shear Promise.



“I always wanted to help people,” Guevara said. “I can see a confidence that they get after. You can tell they feel good about it.”

It’s so rewarding, he said, when a boy who clearly hasn’t had a haircut in months looks in the mirror after asking for a taper or a burst fade and smiles.

Francisco Sujia, 13, and Joshua Orantes, 14, both received haircuts at the organization’s most recent event on July 13. Both said they would have felt embarrassed at school if they hadn’t gotten the trims.

The barbers also serve as mentors for those who sit in their chairs, listening to them and offering them advice.

Such was the case for Erik Perez, whose family was recently able to move out of the condo complex. Shear Promise, he said, opened his eyes to a potential career. He asked the barber to teach him to cut hair and plans to shadow him soon.

“It can help the kids change their paths in the future and give them a good head start in life,” Erik said.

Hagel couldn’t agree more.

“He’s a miracle worker, and it’s so much more than cutting kids’ hair,” he said of Guevara. “It’s about showing that this is a community.”

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For more information about the program, go to [safepassageyouth.org](https://safepassageyouth.org) or call [\(805\) 871-6077](tel:(805)871-6077).



