



SHOUTOUT LA

Meet Delara Tehranchi | Co-founder Coco's Angels Nonprofit Foundation

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We had the good fortune of connecting with **Delara Tehranchi** and we've shared our conversation below.

Hi Delara, what's the most important lesson your business/career has taught you?

The most important lesson I have learned from starting an organization is the importance of gaining a holistic education on the issues and background of the problems your business seeks to solve. For Coco's Angels, this meant not only knowing that over 22,000 children in Los Angeles were in foster care, or that more than 400,000 children nationwide lack permanent homes; it meant searching deeper into the problem before trying to provide a solution. If I just knew surface-level information about the foster system, I would not have been able to pinpoint where and how I could help the most, or how I could direct organizational efforts to impact systemic change. Just like a business owner must understand its customers and what they need before providing a product or service, nonprofits must understand the communities they serve. From there, I can become a leader who critically analyzes issues from multiple perspectives before generating solutions and change-oriented efforts on a community level.

Another lesson I learned from co-founding Coco's Angels is that no organization operates alone. When I first started Coco's Angels, I was so protective of the organization that I wanted to try and control all aspects, fearing others might disrupt the mission or go against what we were trying to do. I knew that so many children could be impacted by others' choices, so I worried



that I should not let too many people in. However, I quickly learned that I could not build momentum without help, and that closing off the organization from people who eagerly wanted to participate in changing the foster care system was selfish and ultimately, antithetical to my goal. Together, with the help of volunteers, we were able to do more. As a collective, we will get the job done better, reaching further than I could ever reach alone.



Can you open up a bit about your work and career? We're big fans and we'd love for our community to learn more about your work.

When I first started Coco's Angels, my younger sister and I were committed to making sure every foster child in Los Angeles County had a present on Christmas. Looking back, that mission



seems so simple compared to what Coco's Angels has grown into today. However, if there is one piece of advice I would give to anyone (especially young female social justice advocates and agents of change), it is to never belittle your efforts by minimizing them. We all have this voice in our heads that tries to sabotage our efforts by telling us that it's not enough or that something will go wrong, but if I had listened to that voice and given it attention, it would have amplified, growing louder and inhibiting me from exacting the change I wanted to orchestrate in the long-term. Instead of listening to that inner saboteur, I found a way to counteract it, and that was through uniting with: social workers, representatives from foster agencies, social science researchers, and entrepreneurs who wanted to use their profits to make a difference. The more I listened to others, the more ways I found to help, and the more Coco's Angels became something so much bigger.

Knowing that I wanted my advocacy to center the foster care system was easy, but figuring out how I could actually implement that change was certainly not. I had to go in front of news organizations and speak on behalf of the foster children, and turn to businesses around metro Los Angeles to make a case for why they should support Coco's Angels' efforts. Every meeting and conversation were an opportunity to gain supporters.

The bottom line, when starting a non-profit, is to realize that no action is too small and no goal too little. The only option is growth. I feel so thankful to the people and organizations that lauded the growth of Coco's and who gave time, money, and actions to represent their belief in me, and more importantly, their belief that change was truly possible. Even when we encountered obstacles with Coco's, like busses breaking down mid-event, we leaned on those who supported us and did not give up, and because of the community of support, we emerged from those challenges stronger and more ready for future hardships all organizations can encounter without notice. What I want the world to know about Coco's Angels and our story is that this story is far from over—this is the story of more than 400,000 foster children across the U.S. It's a story that must be told over and over again, across every platform, classrooms, courtrooms and legislative assemblies, because then I believe improvement will happen.



Any places to eat or things to do that you can share with our readers? If they have a friend visiting town, what are some spots they could take them to?

After picking up my best friend from the airport, I'd give her two options: In-n-Out or Bay Cities. I would share my love for In-n-Out's well-done fries, the animal style way of course, or Bay Cities' Godmother sandwich with the works. Either way, I know she won't regret her choice and after we've taken our food to the pier to people watch, we would hike up the Santa Monica Mountains to take in the view that never seems to get old. Driving up the coast, we would lose ourselves in plant nurseries that we'd stop along the way and spend hours immersed in deep conversations as the waves crashed nearby. By the time we returned home, it would be after watching the sunset from a roadside vista on Pacific Coast Highway. Though L.A. is inarguably filled with the best restaurants like Sugarfish or Elefante, on our first night we would eat my family's undeniably satiating Persian food. The rest of the week would be spent checking out the latest installation at The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), watching a limited run show at The Hollywood Pantages Theatre, and lastly volunteering at the dog rescue Wags & Walks. I know, above all, the memories we'd make would be greater than any of the attractions we experienced.



Shoutout is all about shouting out others who you feel deserve additional recognition and exposure. Who would you like to shoutout?

I cannot take credit for the creation and maintenance of Coco's Angels without shouting out the angel who inspired me to initiate it— my foster sister, Coco. I would also like to shout out foster parents around the nation who have made space in their homes, and more importantly, their hearts, for children who were born into harsh circumstances beyond their control. Each foster parent I meet who dedicates their life to providing exemplary models of guardianship and support inspires me on a daily basis. They are the true heroes who our world needs more of. I could never do what I have done without those foster parents who come from all walks of life to help their foster children overcome trauma, learn that a consistent life is possible and that they are loved unconditionally.



Website: <https://www.cocosangels.org/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/cocosangelsnonprofit/>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxRuHcS11UesrzmVxNg0DA>

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