

## **Kristen Del Valle - Associate Children's Director**

I believe my Catholic upbringing helped to set the foundation for my belief in God however, it never developed into a personal relationship.

My life was pretty ordinary growing up and I'd say I had it pretty easy. It wasn't until High School that it felt like my life went off the deep end. My parents very unexpectedly announced they were getting divorced. I was lost and didn't know how to cope. I turned to partying and relationships to numb the pain. I began walking the complete opposite direction from the things of God and felt like I was flailing to stay afloat.

At the end of high school, a tragic car accident caused a deep depression and in that, I challenged God to show me that there really was something more to live for. He answered. As I'd attend The Chapel, I'd hear God ask me to surrender more and more to Him. This was a terrifying process because I was so embarrassed by some of the choices I had made in my short life and didn't know how God could still love me if I really gave him those things. He was asking me to let go of the shame, unhealthy relationships, anger, and the things I was doing to numb the pain. Over time, God both healed the brokenness of my past and in place of the things I surrendered, God gave me a real, rich relationship with him, and a contentment and fulfillment that I never knew could be possible. I no longer feel as though I have to live under the banner of shame from my past. Instead, I live under the banner that proclaims I am a child of God who is fully known and yet still, fully loved.