

## MINDY'S STORY

Armstead Academic Project's Co-Founder, Mindy married Arik in 2020 and became parents to two beautiful daughters, Amiri and Ayla.

The middle of five children growing up in the town of Arkport in rural upstate New York, Mindy remembers being encouraged by her teachers throughout her school years, and always felt she had the power to be anything she wanted to be. She earned high academic scores and was admitted to Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs. "For me, school felt like a protective place," Mindy says.

Mindy also excelled at athletics, and felt empowered to participate in the sports she loved. Her mother, a teacher and soccer coach with the most wins for a female coach in NYS, supported her in all her endeavors. Mindy's father, a hard-working salesman who now owns a car dealership, was a very nurturing parent and always talked with her about her feelings.

Finishing her undergraduate college degree by the age of 20, Mindy listened to the wise words of her mother who told her not to take "No" for an answer, so she applied to medical school three times. She went on to complete dual masters degrees in Systems Biology and Interdisciplinary Science, and graduated from the University of Buffalo Medical School 2017.

"I always knew I wanted to be a doctor," Mindy says. "In the small town I grew up in, I saw the pediatrician as someone who was very smart and could really help people, so that's what I wanted to do for others."

One of Mindy's sources of inspiration was her brother, who has special needs. "It's important to get an early diagnosis for behavioral intervention," she says. "Today my brother can read and write and has independence, all of which might not have been possible without our family's advocacy on his behalf."

As a result of his influence, Mindy made the decision to work in mental health, specializing in child and adolescent psychiatry at UC Davis, and is now working as a clinical doctor.

Mindy and Arik want their daughters to be empowered to find something they are passionate about, and equally important, is that their daughters will be able to do things and have spaces that are for them. The Armsteads believe that schools are a place for their daughters to access their potential and grades, while important, should not take precedence over a sense of belonging...and they are not stopping with their own children. Arik and Mindy are putting their personal and financial power into creating safe educational spaces for Sacramento and Bay Area children and teens—especially those who are socioeconomically vulnerable—to feel empowered and achieve their goals.



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"At this time our main goal is to address educational disparities and bring opportunities to youth facing socioeconomic challenges. Our mission is to expand our program to include mental health education and resources for the families we serve. Mental illness should not make someone a pariah in our society—and especially not a child. The effects of such ostracism from a young age can be devastating and long-lasting. I aspire to be an advocate and early-intervention resource for youth who may lack that support network in their home or educational environments. If provided the right tools, these vulnerable youth can go on to make wonderful contributions in their families, their schools, and their workplaces across the course of their lives. The compassion and responsibility we show these children today will be reflected in the future they give us tomorrow."