

## Highlights from Cultural Groups

The Cultural Competency Reducing Disparities (CCRD) subcommittees for cultural communities convene on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, with the active participation of community members. Through their collaboration with the Cultural Community Liaisons (CCLs), these subcommittees have secured sponsorships worth approximately \$110,000 to support community service providers in delivering culturally appropriate mental health workshops and outreach events in the identified communities.

Community-driven event planning continues to be the focus, with CCLs and the subcommittees acting as advisors and sponsors. The CCLs also play an invaluable role in providing direct access to the latest information on Mental Health resources for Riverside County community members. The department's role is to educate, provide resources, and increase accessibility to behavioral health services. This approach removes stigma and creates a space to discuss behavioral health openly.

The 2024 Cultural Community Liaisons were:

- Dakota Brown – People with Disabilities
- Riba Eshanzada, LCSW – Middle Eastern/North African (through Aug 2024)
- Shirley Guzman – Hispanic/Latinx
- Hazel Lambert – Black/African American
- Dr. Sean Milanovich – Native American
- Dr. Ernelyn Navarro – Asian American/Pacific Islander
- Kevin Phalavisay – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Intersex, Asexual + (through Jan 2024)
- Rachel Postovoi, LCSW – Deaf/Hard of Hearing (through June 2024)
- Rev. Benita Ramsey – Spirituality/Faith-Based
- Felix Gbagbo – Veterans (started Aug 2024)



# African American Family Wellness Advisory Group (AAFWAG)

Cultural Community Liaison, Hazel Lambert

The African American Family Wellness Advisory Group (AAFWAG) steering committee concluded through its community outreach efforts an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders that mental health disparities cannot be tackled by one group alone. As such, this year's theme centered on "Cultivating Synergy". AAFWAG's mission is to ensure that collective efforts from community leaders, healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, and families engage in creating sustainable solutions that embody synergy.

AAFWAG partnered with Building Resilient Communities on the Brother2Brother Fellowship Program, which includes a series of workshops focused on Black men's physical and mental health, financial literacy, spirituality, value system, and more. The program provides peer-to-peer support, networking opportunities, resources, and tools to support men's overall well-being.



AAFWAG hosted a Juneteenth Mixer "Cultivating Synergy – Reducing Silo Mentality". The AAFWAG steering committee identified and collaborated with key community leaders, educators, and public service officers to serve as panelists to address historical barriers, stigma, and mistrust of the behavioral health system that have prevented African Americans from seeking help. Community members engaged in dialogue and provided survey feedback that identified pathways to reducing silo mentality by focusing on education, collaboration, and culturally competent care.



The California Association for Community Engagement and Wellness Services, AAFWAG, and the National Council of Negro Women joined forces to support the Amani Maternal Mental Health Project. AAFWAG's mission to increase awareness and the seeking of culturally competent services is reflected in the Amani Maternal Mental Health Project which includes a continuum of mental health care aimed at reducing maternal and infant mortality among Black mothers from conception to six months postpartum.



Once again, AAFWAG sponsored the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual State of the Black Inland Empire Summit hosted by California Assemblymember Dr. Corey A. Jackson. The summit engaged over three hundred community stakeholders and partners in a collaborative discussion focused on health, housing, barriers of equity, entrepreneurship, safety, and overall well-being of the African American community.

Additional events sponsored by AAFWAG included “Equine Assisted Mental Health Day”, Black History Expo, “Embracing Strength and Resilience Through Time”, and “Synergize & Flourish: Nurturing Minds & Cultivating Community” with Temecula Our Own Village.



AAFWAG also supported community partners’ events to provide mental health discussion, including but not limited to Riverside Community College “Spring 2024 Health and Wellness Fair”, and California State University San Bernardino-Palm Desert, “Get Psyched” career day event.



# Asian Pacific Islander Desi American & Native Hawaiian (APIDANH)

Cultural Community Liaison, Dr. Ernelyn Navarro

The Asian Pacific Islander Desi American & Native Hawaiian (APIDANH) Alliance's top priorities for the past year included: **Advocacy, Access, and Collaboration** guiding the activities of the sub-committee and assigned Cultural Community Liaison. Highlighted activities and sponsored events illuminating our goals:

## Advocacy:

- Several members of the sub-committee and other community leaders/stakeholders were invited by California Assemblymember Dr. Corey Jackson to participate in the AAPI Roundtable on April 19, 2024. The discussion focused on the needs and challenges diverse AANHPI community members are dealing with in his region and in the Inland Empire (photos below)



- Active participation in the monthly Community DNA (Data Narrative Action) meeting hosted by AAPI Data to discuss data disaggregation, obtain updates on AAPI Hate and Discrimination research; immigration issues, AAPI youth and bullying, COVID-19 and mental health, needs of nail salon workers, etc.
- Representatives from the community also participated in the MHSA Public Hearing Forum and feedback surveys.

## Access:

- The National Alliance of Filipino Americans located in Palm Springs, was added as a member of the APIDANH Alliance. We will be partnering with their monthly medical outreach in the desert region to provide mental health resources and referrals.
- With the ending of the RUHS BH's contract with the Perris Valley Filipino American Association, and to ensure continuity, the Asian Pacific Counseling and Treatment Center (APCTC) added the Resource Center to their scope of services.

- Several community events were sponsored by the committee to provide outreach and education: Riverside Lunar Festival; Eastvale Lantern Festival; Asian Business Association-Inland Empire's "Health 2 Wealth" Fair; Inland Chinese American Alliance's Mid-Autumn Festival; Vista Murrieta High School Suicide Prevention Fair; Perris Valley Filipino American Association Wellness Walk; Asian Pacific Counseling and Treatment Centers (APCTC) and RUHS BH booth at the Bullying Prevention & Wellness Conference hosted by Riverside Medical Clinic Charitable Foundation; Filipino Catholic Church Ministry
- We also sponsored a 10-session community education and support group for adults in the mid-county region hosted by the Perris Valley Filipino American Association. The group (17-20 participants) met bi-monthly and learned about the 10 Guideposts to Wholehearted Living based on Dr. Brene Brown's research and book. (photos below)



#### **Collaboration:**

- The APIDANH Alliance partnered with the American Immigration Council to facilitate discussion on AAPI immigrant community needs in support of the APIDANH Alliance's theme of **"Belongingness"** at our annual Hope and AAPI Heritage Month celebration, 2024.
- We expanded our collaboration with the National Ecumenical Forum for Filipino Concerns (NEFFCON) with two sessions of the Pilipino American Inter-Cultural School (PAIS-IE) aimed at fostering and forging intercultural understanding, empowerment, and resilience.
- Developed a partnership with a Tongan organization, Motivating Action Leadership Opportunity (MALO), that serves the Inland Empire region. Provided a workshop on Emotion Regulation and Resiliency during their youth retreat in Temecula last July. (see photos below)



# Deaf Collaborative Advisory Network (DCAN)

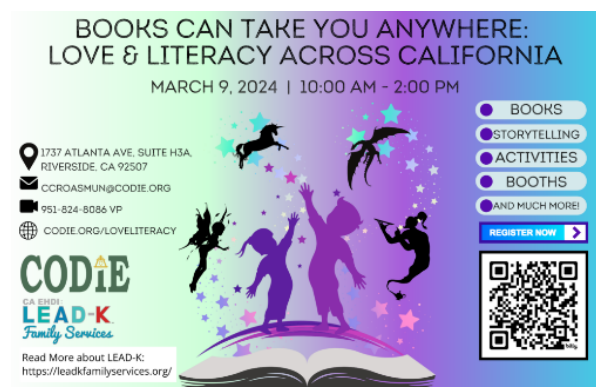
Cultural Community Liaison, Rachel Postvoit, LCSW

Acting DCAN Chair, Gloria Moriarty, Lead Advocate Center on Deafness Inland Empire

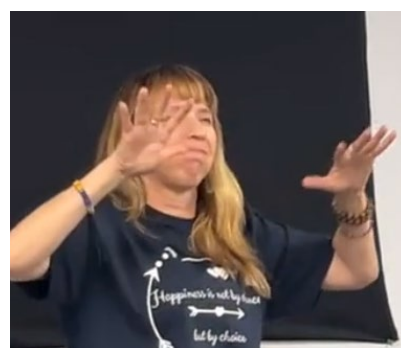
The Deaf Collaborative Advisory Network (DCAN) continues to expand its reach to the Deaf and Hard-Of-Hearing community through ongoing partnerships.



Partnerships with Model Deaf Community's DeaFestival and Center on Deafness Inland Empire's (CODIE) Deaf Wellness Fair, bringing mental health and wellness resources to the community "where they are at". This year's 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Deaf Wellness Fair brought new wellness resources and education to over 250 deaf community members in a fun family-friendly way, including a presentation on Brain Health with RUHS BH Dr. Ben Wilson, Asian-based cultural wellness games with So Cal Asian Deaf Association (SCADA), a self-defense demonstration, petting zoo and more!



DCAN also partnered with CODIE, for the Love & Literacy Program across California. Cultural Community Liaison, Rachel Postvoit was able to interact with youth and their parents in a storytelling activity, followed by a resource fair where she provided more information on



mental health services and resources and encouraged the community to seek help when needed.





DCAN partnered with Cultural Community Liaison Dakota Brown from the Wellness And Disability Equity (WADE) Alliance to outreach to community members at the Our Hands Speak event hosted by Inland Regional Center (IRC). Together, they provided resources and information on a variety of behavioral health services offered by RUHS BH.



DCAN continues advocacy work to bring awareness to the unique needs of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities so barriers to receiving services can be removed. One way they do this is by raising the community voices through ongoing Deaf Town Hall meetings, where community gathers and shares their experiences while seeking behavioral health services. DCAN then brings information gathered to RUHS BH to begin collaborating on ways to remove barriers and improve service delivery.



DCAN member Dr. Ben Wilson partnered with Rise Interpreting in his first opportunity to provide training on brain health to ASL interpreting staff. This effort was driven by the need to increase the knowledge of the interpreter on mental health topics which will in turn provide better communication delivery to our deaf members during their visits. "Up Your Interpreting Game by Improving Your Brain Health" aims to familiarize interpreting staff with basic terminology used in behavioral health settings and provide tips on how to keep their own brains healthy while providing a space to openly discuss mental health and wellness. Twenty-six ASL interpreters attended this inaugural four-hour training.

## Hispanic/Latinx (HISLA)

### Cultural Community Liaison, Shirley Guzman

The Hispanic/Latinx (HISLA) community in Riverside comprises a large percentage of the population and can be found throughout the county in high numbers, from the Desert to Mid-county through the Western regions. HISLA makes every effort to ensure we are serving the needs of all these communities. We participate in local events and collaborate with existing organizations to access the many sub-communities to share information and resources addressing behavioral health needs.



**Blythe** Shirley Guzman facilitated a presentation on for Senior Citizens, at the Reopening of the Blythe Community Resource Center focusing on Mental Health for Older Adults. She provided psychoeducation on the symptoms of depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia.

*Highlight:* A grandmother attendee raising her grandson stated that the presentation resonated with her because her grandson exhibits some of the signs associated with schizophrenia. She ultimately visited a mental health clinic looking for services for her grandson because resources I had shared with them.



Partnering with local organizations, HISLA Outreached at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Peace From Chaos March and Rally Event and at the Blythe Children's Services Open House. The HISLA Chair participated in the RAP's Foundation Data Collection efforts for the community of Blythe which highlighted the needs in the community. The report has been shared with RUHS BH staff which has helped to make progress toward shining the spotlight on Blythe and bringing resources to the community. There continues to be an ongoing need and work to be done to increase awareness of health services in the community.

### Thousand Palms

Collaborated with HOPE Collaborative on a Family Strengthening Resource Fair event at the Thousand Palms Community Center where we provided Family mental health resources and activities for the families. The event was the first of its kind and was well received by the community. We agreed to make this an annual event and collaborative efforts are underway to plan the event for the upcoming year.



## Moreno Valley

Collaborated with the Moreno Valley Senior Center and facilitated a presentation on older adults and mental health. Provided a safe space for the participants to share their views and experiences with mental health. Candid conversations were had to reduce the stigma associated with mental health and increase access to resources provided by RUHS BH. The presentation was well attended; 25 participants shared positive feedback that they would like this to be a weekly event.

## Perris

Participated in the City of Perris Youth Conference, interacted with 200+ students, provided mental health resources, and talked to them about entering the mental health field. Presented to the Perris Youth Advisory Council focusing on resisting peer pressure and suicide awareness. Provided RUHS BH mental health resources to the students in attendance.

## Thermal/Mecca

Tabled at the GANAS (Genuine. Animate. Navigate. Assist. Succeed) Resource Fair Event in Thermal. GANAS' mission is to improve the quality of life of the Hispanic and Latino Special Needs Community and their families by empowering each member of the family unit. HISLA provided mental health awareness and resources to the families in attendance. Tabled at the HOPE Collaborative Family Strengthening Event in Thermal, resulting in learning that there is a growing Salvadoran community there. Shared mental health resources and talked to them about normalizing conversations around mental health.

## Riverside

The HISLA Chair, Shirley Guzman, attended the Mayor's Multicultural Forum, where she met with prominent members of the community, and initiated planning to collaborate on projects for 2025 to increase awareness and decrease Mental Health stigma in the HISLA community. Also, while tabling the Recovery Happens event at Fairmount Park, she engaged community members in conversations about mental health and invited them to our HISLA subcommittee meetings. This resulted in one family becoming a regular attendee and their son being linked to resources and volunteer opportunities in the community.



Our October HISLA Subcommittee meeting honored Hispanic Heritage. Maria Rivera and Angelica Rodriguez, radio hosts at the KERU bilingual radio station in Blythe, were recognized for their contributions to the Hispanic community. They come from a family with a long history of advocating for migrant workers, and they marched alongside Cesar Chavez. We had 50+ people in attendance.

# Community Advocating for Gender & Sexual Inclusion/Equity (CAGSIE)

Cultural Community Liaison, Kevin Phalavisay

Acting CAGSIE Chair Dylan Colt, Senior Peer Support Specialist - Education & Training



The Community Advocating for Gender and Sexuality Issues (CAGSI) was renamed Community Advocating for Gender and Sexual Inclusion/Equity (CAGSIE) this year after an open dialogue during the subcommittee meeting occurred surrounding how the word “Issues” could be perceived as negative. Along with the revised name, the subcommittee voted to rework the logo for a more inclusive feel to the community as a whole.

CAGSIE continues to work throughout the community doing outreach at events like Palm Springs Pride where information on a variety of RUHS BH programs was provided along with meaningful conversations about what wellness looks like in the LGBTQ community in real time, along with fun wellness activities. To support these conversations, there was a wide range of RUHS BH staff from peer support to clinical therapists available to the community. Other outreach efforts included RUHS BH May is Mental Health Month, Recovery Happens, 1 Life 1 Heart Poisoning and Overdose Awareness 5k Walk and many more.





CAGSIE continues to collaborate with several community organizations including Greater Palm Springs Pride, The Center, TruEvolution, and DAP Health to ensure the most up-to-date information and resources are being provided to the community and providers. CAGSIE is committed to continuing to seek and build new partnerships for collaboration throughout the county.

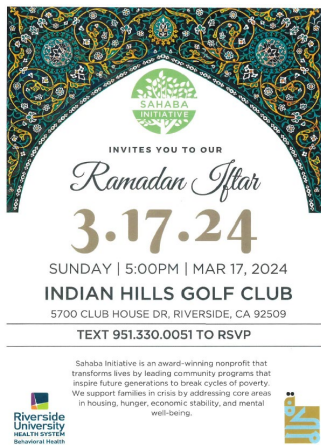
CAGSIE also continues to develop and facilitate training like "LGBTQIA2+ Basics" and "Serving the LGBTQIA2+ Community" to RUHS BH staff and community partners to raise awareness and understanding of the unique needs of the LGBTQ community and how to better serve this population.



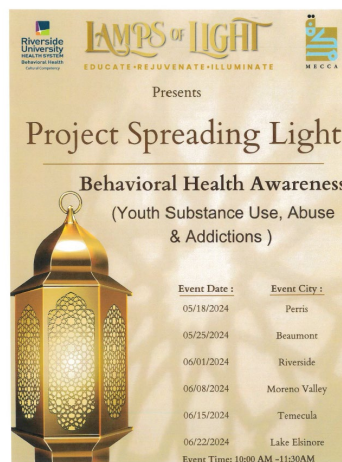
# Middle Eastern and North African (MENA/MECCA)

Cultural Community Liaison, Riba Eshanzada, LCSW  
Acting MENA/MECCA Chair, Misty Martin, Senior Family Advocate

The Middle Eastern and North African (MENA/MECCA) allyship and Interfaith engagement efforts continued this year through interfaith events such as Sahaba Initiative's Interfaith Brunch and Ramadan Dinner where leaders, providers, and community members from a wide range of backgrounds and lived experiences came together to further reduce the stigma around mental health and help-seeking through dialogue and education on the importance of mental health and well-being in their diverse communities. MENA/MECCA established a new partnership with the Arabic Christian Church in Corona and had the opportunity to begin stigma reduction efforts surrounding mental health and help-seeking by offering resources and information on behavioral health services to the congregation members during their Christmas and Easter Celebrations. MENA/MECCA was able to sponsor and attend the Muslim Family Foundations 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Friendship Dinner, which focused on Building Family Resiliency within the MENA community.



The MENA/MECCA subcommittee continues to seek and support educational opportunities for both community and professionals on the unique needs of the diverse MENA communities throughout Riverside County. Two areas of focus this year were substance use awareness in MENA youth and cultural humility while working with the Muslim community. MENA/MECCA also continues efforts to raise cultural awareness for those working with all MENA populations by providing training to community partners and organizations such as Reach Out and CHAIRS.



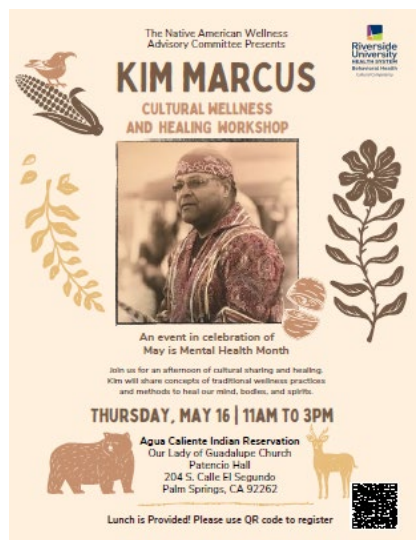
MENA/MECCA continues community outreach efforts through a variety of events like Sahaba Initiative's Humanitarian Day, RUHS BH May is Mental Health Month, Riverside Inland E Pride and much more.



# Native American Wellness Advisory Committee (NAWAC)

Cultural Community Liaison, Dr. Sean Milanovich

The Native American Wellness Advisory Committee (NAWAC) meets monthly with community members and advocate groups to promote wellness, healing, and happiness. NAWAC uses Native American values, epistemologies, and traditional ways to reinforce Native American healing practices. These practices include meeting together, sharing food, acknowledging one another, ceremony, and working collaboratively. Dr. Milanovich Chairs the Native American Wellness Advisory Committee. The membership is growing as the teachings of resiliency resonate with the community and the Native voice is heard. An important contribution by The Native American Wellness Advisory Committee was the review and updating of the Native American Land Acknowledgement in January 2024. This formal statement is utilized to open meetings and gatherings taking place on the Native American ancestral lands in Riverside County, honoring, recognizing, and respecting the Indigenous peoples who are the original inhabitants of the land and their commitment to protecting and preserving the land.



Cahuilla tribal elder Kim Marcus was brought into the circle to help provide services of prayer, blessings, songs, and guidance for the Native American community and RUHS BH. Elder Marcus and Dr. Milanovich worked together at events, each opening multiple events this year. In May, Kim Marcus conducted a wellness and healing workshop on the Agua Caliente Reservation for the Native American community. The event was well attended.

At the beginning of the year, Dr. Sean Milanovich collaborated with UC San Diego and Indigenous Futures Institute to host and participate in an Indigenous lead workshop and information sharing on the Agua Caliente Reservation. Indigenous Futures Institute is a Native-run LGBTQ+ student group from UC San Diego. Dr. Milanovich helped to bring together the Native LGBTQ+ community, cultural bearers, and scholars to contribute to

epistemologies and ideas reducing stigma and sharing a love for Native culture.

Dr. Milanovich has collaborated with California Indian Nations College over the past year. At the beginning of the school year, August 2024, Dr. Milanovich was invited to the school orientation to provide mental health resources and facilitate an affirmations circle. Young and adult Native American students stood in a circle and shared positive affirmations about themselves or others within the group. The Affirmations circle helped ground students in their tribal identity and realize their value as contributing people.

Dr. Sean Milanovich and Carlos Lamadrid, LCSW continue to work with Desert Sage Youth Wellness Center providing talking circles to Native American youth. Dr. Milanovich also provides this service of conducting traditional talking circles, a path for healing, at the Agua Caliente Reservation and elsewhere as needed and requested.



NAWAC actively participated in planning for The Philippine American Intercultural School of the Inland Empire (PAIS-IE) and co-sponsored the 3-day weekend event entitled, "Breaking Barriers and Bridging Communities for Health and Wellness." The members helped to arrange speakers and tours of the Indian Canyons and Agua Caliente Cultural Museum and a panel discussion entitled, "Native American Tribes of Aiakiach, Riverside County and Southern California." The well-attended event introduced the local Cahuilla People, a Native American community in and around the Coachella Valley, as the stewards of the land. Dr. Sean Milanovich served as the topic expert and a **keynote speaker** sharing, "The Native American Experience."

**PAIS-IE is dedicated to the future.**  
As a project of the National Educational Forum for Filipino Concerns-IE, it serves as a bridge between the past and the future to strengthen American identity as multicultural and intercultural communities rooted in the richness of the indigenous culture and histories of its diverse peoples.

**Fall 2024 Curriculum**  
**PAIS-IE**  
Philippine American Intercultural School of the Inland Empire

**Breaking Barriers & Building Communities through Health & Wellness**  
an intentional intercultural trans-generational encounter  
**September 13-14, 2024**

**The How**  
• Inter-personal communication and exposure  
• Design knowledge and experience  
• Design method of learning  
• Critical thinking  
• Programmatic curriculum & pedagogy

**Tuition, including food and travel, is waived for the first 500 registrants and limited by \$2,500 per person Monday, August 20, 2024. Reserve your seat via the QR code.**

**Maraming salamat po!**  
Special thanks to the students, participants, educators, volunteers, & our funders: The California Endowment, & Riverside Community Foundation.

**NAWAC**  
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**Solidarity**  
Let's build, foster, and forge intercultural understanding, empowerment, and resilience with our communities of Black Indigenous People of Color and allies through:  
• leadership cultivation  
• healing practices  
• narrative transformation

**Our Core**  
Revolutionizing healing, social sciences, language, and the arts, our curriculum has three major components:  
• Sharing national & social histories  
• Expressing native identities  
• Achieving solidarity with each other's experience

**Competative Studies**  
• Ethnic communities in the Inland Empire, Mexican settings, migration, displacement, and colonialism

**Participants-Centered Learning**  
• Each of us is a focus, guiding our own search for identity, meaning, and direction

**Friday, September 13, 2024**  
Arrival of First 500 Registrants  
8:00 am Board Meeting  
9:00 am Check-in, Registration & Networking  
9:30 am Welcome, Opening Prayer, Land Acknowledgment, Haida Gwaii  
10:30 am Dinner  
11:30 am Panel: Healing and Resilience: Stories, Dr. Evelyn Navarro-Chavez  
12:00 pm Interfaith Informed by Land, Disasters, & People Power: House Duragunah  
1:30 pm Lunch  
2:00 pm Panel: Healing and Resilience: Stories, Dr. Evelyn Navarro-Chavez  
3:00 pm Panel: Healing and Resilience: Stories, Dr. Evelyn Navarro-Chavez  
4:00 pm Panel: Healing and Resilience: Stories, Dr. Evelyn Navarro-Chavez  
5:00 pm Dinner  
6:00 pm Panel: Healing and Resilience: Stories, Dr. Evelyn Navarro-Chavez  
7:00 pm Panel: Healing and Resilience: Stories, Dr. Evelyn Navarro-Chavez  
8:00 pm Panel: Healing and Resilience: Stories, Dr. Evelyn Navarro-Chavez  
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11:00 pm Panel: Healing and Resilience: Stories, Dr. Evelyn Navarro-Chavez  
12:00 am Panel: Healing and Resilience: Stories, Dr. Evelyn Navarro-Chavez

**Saturday, September 14, 2024 (continued)**  
12:30 pm Self-guided tour of the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum  
1:00 pm Board Meeting  
1:30 pm Panel: Healing and Resilience: Stories, Dr. Evelyn Navarro-Chavez  
2:00 pm Panel: Healing and Resilience: Stories, Dr. Evelyn Navarro-Chavez  
3:00 pm Panel: Healing and Resilience: Stories, Dr. Evelyn Navarro-Chavez  
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NAWAC and Dr. Milanovich continue to engage with the Native American community and organizations to help reduce stigma, create access to resources, led by example, and use culturally appropriate approaches to address mental health concerns. Dr. Milanovich also teaches others how to culturally approach Native American communities and build healthy relationships with one another, benefitting the larger Riverside County community.

# Spirituality & Interfaith

Cultural Community Liaison, Rev. Benita Ramsey

The Spirituality & Interfaith subcommittee is developing a training program for mental health professionals in collaboration with RUHS BH's Workforce Education and Training (WET). The program will focus on spirituality's significance in person-centered mental health care and will launch in early 2025.

The Interfaith and Spirituality Subcommittee, under the guidance of Spirituality & Interfaith Cultural Community Liaison Rev. Benita Ramsey, made significant strides in 2024 to bridge the gap between the interfaith community and Riverside University Health System Behavioral Health (RUHS BH).

## Key accomplishments include:

### 1. Collaborative Efforts with the Mobile Crisis Team:

The subcommittee partnered with the Mobile Crisis Team to bring the Mobile Van into community interfaith spaces. This initiative connected spiritual leaders, community providers, and educators across Riverside County, enhancing awareness and utilization of the county's crisis services.



### 2. First Annual World Mental Health Day Event:

In October, the subcommittee hosted its inaugural World Mental Health Day event, bringing together interfaith leaders to address critical issues such as reducing mental health stigma, increasing access to behavioral health services within congregations, and fostering the development of mental health ministries. The event included:

- A resource fair with demonstrations on administering Narcan
- Practical tips for handling mental health episodes during worship
- Information on accessing crisis support services



3. **Soft Launch of a Training Program for Mental Health Professionals:**

In partnership with RUHS BH's Workforce Education and Training (WET) division, the subcommittee piloted a training program designed for mental health professionals. The program emphasized the ethical integration of spirituality into trauma-informed, person-centered mental health care, laying the groundwork for a full launch in the future.

These initiatives underscore the subcommittee's commitment to fostering meaningful collaboration between behavioral health services and the interfaith community while championing holistic approaches to mental health care.



# Veterans

Cultural Community Liaison, Felix Gbagbo



The new Veterans Cultural Community Liaison and Clinical Therapist, Felix Gbagbo began in August 2024. He joined the existing Riverside County Behavior Health Commission's Veteran's Subcommittee attending their monthly meeting before later being welcomed by the entire Commission at their public meeting on November 6, 2024. The Cultural Competency Program is excited to now have a designated individual to assist Veterans with their behavioral health needs irrespective of their disability status, honorable or dishonorable status, targeting anyone who served our nation.

With approximately 112,000 veterans in Riverside County, Felix, and the Veterans Subcommittee are committed to reaching as many veterans as possible to provide them access to housing, veterans benefits, and health resources, working to link them to and navigate the VA system toward improving their well-being and quality of life.

## **Accomplishments thus far:**

### **Advocacy:**

Advocated on veterans' behalf to assist with accessing services, resources, and information relating to a higher level of care:

- Advocated for 5250 Psychiatry Hold for Convalescence/Nursing Home and Emergency Room veterans to improve their well-being and to receive the best care
- Financial resources to decrease the stress of potential homelessness for a wheelchair-bound veteran having challenges paying overdue utility bills by speaking with the Salvation Army and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) on the veteran's behalf; and
- Participated in a Veterans Day Discussion Panel at Temecula Adult Clinic to discuss topics on Mental Health Challenges for Veterans in the County of Riverside

### **Networking:**

Gained additional contacts and learned more about existing services and resources by attending a series of events to network with County, non-profits, and government groups and individuals interested in serving the needs of veterans, including:

- Congressperson, Dr. Raul Ruiz, (Emergency Room Physician) Veterans University Event (Public Library, Hemet)
- Riverside County Veteran's Advisory Committee Meeting (American Legion Post, Riverside)
- BRIDGING THE GAP – Addressing Intersectional Health Disparities and Strengthening Support in the VETERAN COMMUNITY Meeting (Jurupa Valley)
- 2024 Veterans Expo hosted by Senator Kelly Seyarto (Murrieta)
- California Assemblymember, Dr. Corey Jackson (Peer Support Resource Center, Riverside) Veterans Care access and concerns discussion
- 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans and Community Expo/Planning and Networking Meeting (Cathedral City)

#### **Outreach:**

Reached groups who support veterans and veterans directly, shared resources, and offered services and/or assistance in accessing services via resource tables at:

- Veterans Suicide Awareness event (American Legion, Indio), partnering with the RUHS BH Mobile Crisis Management and Response team
- Veterans Safety Standdown (National Guard Armory, March Air Reserve Base, Riverside) again partnering with RUHS BH Mobile Crisis Management and Response team
- 2024 Veterans Expo hosted by Senator Kelly Seyarto (Murrieta) to receive Mental Health educational resources for veterans

#### **Support:**

Provided therapy, transportation, assessments, resources, education, and collaborated care to veterans throughout Blythe, Indio, Banning, Temecula, Hemet, and Riverside:

- Veteran consumer (Temecula Adult Clinic on Mondays)
- Transported veterans to and from the Medical Center Prosthetics Unit, Medical Centers, and Apartment Complexes to receive care and placement
- Collaborated care with a retired Army Sergeant 1st Class/Deacon, and an HHOPE Certified Peer Support Specialist to provide grief counseling
- Provided psychoeducation and resources to veterans at Rustin Peer Resource Center regarding Mental Health and navigating the VA System
- Partnered with the HHOPE Street Outreach team and the HHOPE Veterans Outreach team to house unsheltered/homeless veterans and to provide them with psychoeducation, therapy, and assistance with navigating the VA Disability Claims process

Felix Gbagbo has only just begun to honor the commitment he shares with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, demonstrated by their March 2023 update to their mission statement, "To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors." As a Navy Veteran and Clinical Therapist, he is well-equipped to inform the Veterans Subcommittee to serve members and veterans in Riverside County.

# Wellness and Disability Equity Alliance (WADE)

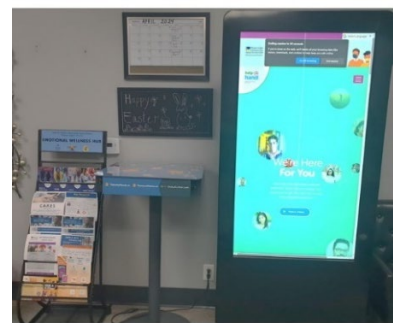
Cultural Community Liaison, Dakota Brown

The Wellness and Disability Equity Alliance (WADE) was very active this year. We collaborated with various County divisions, outside organizations, and individuals, advocating and educating. We were committed to reaching a variety of communities by participating in a range of events where we shared behavioral health resources with our members and information for other communities. We work diligently to provide resources to the community we serve, but also to educate the community at large about the challenges and abilities of people with disabilities.

With a target population that crosses all the other CCL communities, WADE endeavors to participate widely in outreach events to ensure advocacy for the people with disabilities community. We are also highly involved in participating in and developing training to help those who serve people with disabilities and transform people's perception of Ability.

Select WADE Highlights:

Worked with Suicide Prevention Coalition's (SPC) *Upstream* subcommittee with the goal of increasing connectedness between people, family members, and community, to provide cultural input and accessibility to the "Increasing Connection, Saving Lives" presentation for mature adults. Connected *Upstream* team to county and civic venues and personnel to schedule shows for providers and stakeholders and advised team to expand the show beyond seniors and increase their reach by including people with disabilities.



Opened the RUHS BH Emotional Wellness Hub at *Blindness Support Services (BSS)* with a special kick-off event featuring the installation of a charging station, brochure stand, and kiosk. Delivered CCL training for both staff and members and paved the way for Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) training to be provided to BSS.

The Chair, Dakota Brown, served on the development team for the Innovation Eating Disorder Intensive Outpatient Program and Training Project, "Mindful Body and Recovery Program." She provided valuable accessibility feedback, universal design recommendations, and information on the special treatment considerations of People with Disabilities and continues to inform the development and work of the project.





WADE continued to provide opportunities for families and People with Disabilities to improve their quality of life by creating relationships, working on social skills and supports, increasing resilience, exercising together, and reducing stigma with sponsorship of SoCal Adaptive Sports' International Day of Persons with Disabilities at the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens. WADE also deepened its partnership with the Autism Society Inland Empire (ASIE) by sponsoring both the mid-county Autism Acceptance Walk and the Desert Autism Spooktacular.

Worked with low/no vision The Date invite and membership trifold documents are all screen-reader-creating Braille Flier for low/no use Braille to



marketing to create a accessible WADE flier, Save subcommittee brochure. These high-contrast text and friendly. WADE is also versions of the First Friday vision stakeholders who consume materials.



Created and delivered presentations & trainings:

- A Positive Approach to Serving People with Disabilities
- Disability Etiquette
- Ableism and Ageism (Transforming our perceptions of Disability)
- Disability Pride and Social Justice
- Disability Employment
- Using the Peer Model in the Caregiving Industry
- Invisible Disabilities
- Ableism and a Nuanced Understanding of Disability Culture
- Disability, Suicide Prevention, and Protective Factors

Shared these trainings and presentations with groups like: State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD), Inland Coalition on Aging/Master Plan on Aging (ICA/MPA-IE), RUHS BH Workforce Education and Training (WET), Inland Empire Disability Collaborative (IEDC), The LGBTQ Center in Palm Springs, Inland Caregiver Resource Center (ICRC) PEARLS providers, and The RUHS BH All-Peer Workforce in Desert and Mid-County

## Joint Effort

### Cultural Competency Team



#### **PEI Annual Contract Provider Summit 2024 – “Working Together” – August 29, 2024**

**Six of the** Cultural Community Liaisons served on a Panel Discussion. They discussed cultural considerations for providers engaging with their communities, connecting with the values of their members, building trust through engagement, creative engagement with specific cultural groups, creating a welcoming inclusive environment, and treating everyone with empathy and respect while being open to other perspectives and experiences.

Some of the Liaisons partnered with NEFFCON-IE, a local non-profit committed to building, fostering, and forging intercultural understanding, empowerment, and resilience within Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and allies, in the planning and implementation of two grant-funded **Philippine American Intercultural School (PAIS-IE)** cultural educational events. The first, **“Placemaking & Belonging”** – highlighted Chinese and Korean culture in Riverside, and the second, **“Breaking Barriers and Bridging Communities for Health and Wellness,”** spotlighted the Cahuilla and Agua Caliente band of Native Americans along with other communities in the Desert region of Riverside County.

The Liaisons promoted the participation of their respective communities and they actively engaged in the Riverside County Behavioral Health Commission (**BHC**) **Public Community Hearings** that occurred in the three regions of Riverside County: Hemet (Mid-County), Moreno Valley (Western), and Indio (Desert). They also shared behavioral health resources at the **MiMHM: The Art of Wellness** event, outreaching the various cultural communities. This annual RUHS BH free, family-friendly, public event occurred in each of the three regions, celebrating May is Mental Health Month in the cities of: Indio, San Jacinto, and Riverside.

On the heels of last year’s successful Caring Across Cultures: Multicultural Symposium on Mental Health, currently, the CCLs are leading the planning of a 2025 Multicultural Symposium, **“Why Culture Matters: Whole Person Behavioral and Spiritual Health in Diverse Communities”**, promoting cultural competency. The symposium will integrate cross-cultural knowledge of unfamiliar and diverse cultures by cultivating cultural proficiency to optimize health, resilience, and quality of care. The focus is to enhance and promote skill-building and confidence to work with diverse communities. The symposium will connect people who would otherwise not encounter one another through community-building activities and dialogue